

PLAY Issue 192 • The Force Unleashed II Lord of The Rings: War In The North LA Noire Lost Planet 2 F.E.A.R. 3 Split/Second Test Drive Unlimited 2 ModNation Racers Skate 3 Vanquish Kane & Lynch 2

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first look

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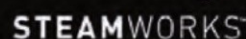
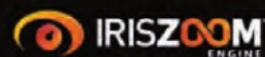
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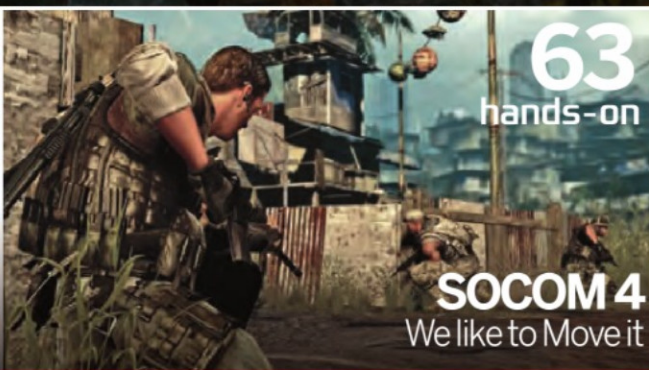
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Welcome PLAY

The UK's best independent PlayStation magazine

A long time ago...



Very few things stay with us for an entire lifetime: friends, hair, our youthful good looks, but some things are forever. For me and many millions of others I'm sure *Star Wars* is one of those forever-type things. It was here before me and it will be there when I'm long gone, but while I'm still around that galaxy far, far away keeps me constantly intrigued

and entertained. In recent years George Lucas might not have made the moves to keep die-hard fans happy but the fact remains that he conceived and created the *Star Wars* universe and arguably the best sci-fi trilogy there is or is ever likely to be. So powerful is *Star Wars* that more than 30 years after the original movie's release fans are still excited by the next book, TV spin-off or, more importantly, videogame release bearing the *Star Wars* name.

The strongest force in the entertainment universe

Like the film licence, *Star Wars* videogames have enjoyed huge success and some very

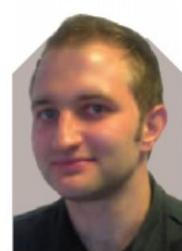
low points but with *The Force Unleashed* LucasArts has struck upon a formula that seems to fit the franchise perfectly – amped up Force powers, solid combat and a conflicted young protagonist that reminds us of another young Jedi that started the whole story off. *The Force Unleashed* accomplished a lot in its first instalment but like *The Empire Strikes Back* proved, the sequel will be even better. Having exclusive access to the game at Skywalker Studios this month has convinced us that this

will not only build on the original game but re-establish *Star Wars* as the strongest force in the entertainment universe. Be sure to check out our behind-the-scenes feature on page 32.

Of course we have plenty for the non-Force fans this month, too, with an exclusive preview of the new *Lord Of The Rings* title *War In the North*, a look at why the PS3 is leading the way when it comes to game development and more previews and reviews than you can wave a coloured, lasery stick at. Enjoy the issue and may the Force be... well, you know the rest.

K. HENNESSEY Editor

contributors



Dan Peel

Dan's picture last appeared on the contributors page in issue 170 nearly two years ago. He's back now, and he's changed. He talks about how he's changed.

He turns out he's got a bit of an attitude. Still can't afford to shave his head though. All a sub editor has to do is check the mag for mistakes, and he can't even do that. We bet he doesn't even correct the overfl



Darran Jones

You may remember Darran indecently exposed himself to some children last month, so this month we jokingly asked him how he was going to up the ante.

"Have you killed someone this month, Darran?" he jovially quipped. He paused for a worryingly long time then said, "No... but I ran someone over." It was actually a very gentle bump at about 1mph. Phew!



Simon Miller

Miller's band, MG & The Juggernaut, has finally found itself a bass player just in time for its debut gig and she's a girl. Plays bass like a massive monster, though,

which is ironic given that Miller is a massive monster but plays guitar and sings like a girl. We can't wait for the gig because Miller's promised he'll mark the occasion with an alcoholic drink!

the PLAY promise

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We will always bring you the most in-depth, impartial, honest reviews and will never bow down to PR or advertising pressure. We have some of the most experienced reviewers in

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So don't expect our previews to simply regurgitate a load of internet or press release tosh – we'll be telling you whether a game is looking good or not, regardless of the stage of the code.

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Where fact + opinion ÷ PlayStation = the truth

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"Every three to six months we were doing tech demos and it's a relief to be out of that" – Tameem Antoniades, chief design ninja at Ninja Theory, p. 11

Sony E3
Press Conference
15 June, 19:30 GMT



THE E3 COUNTDOWN

Sony tells us "you need to be very excited"

Speaking exclusively to **Play** in the buildup to the Electronic Entertainment Expo next month, Sony has told us that we have every right to be getting very excited about what's going to be shown. What will be particularly sweet music to the ears of PlayStation fans is that according to head of UK PR for SCE David Wilson, new sequels to existing franchises and new IP will both be playing a large part in proceedings. The only question that remains now then is whether or not Sony can keep its reveals secret until 15 June,

when it holds its E3 press conference at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles.

But leaks and rumours aren't our concern right now. All we wanted to know was just what Sony was planning on talking about at E3 and there's plenty according to Wilson, who believes this year's E3 will be even bigger than the last one. "We can't speak for the whole industry but indications are that this year's E3 will be bigger and better," he said. "From our perspective we have an important year with new technologies, PlayStation Move, 3D, new iterations of

favourite franchises and brand-new titles all vying for the limelight."

The promise of "new iterations of favourite franchises and brand-new titles," are the magic words that gamers want to hear and frankly couldn't have made us happier, until Wilson added, "We genuinely feel that we have one of our most exciting lineups ever so we think you need to be very excited."

If you just felt a shiver run up your spine then we're with you. Sony seems to be going into E3 all guns blazing this year and with good reason as a good E3 can

Need To Know IMPORTANT GAMING NEWS YOU WON'T WANT TO MISS



Demon's Souls Dated For Europe

Namco Bandai has announced it will be publishing *Demon's Souls* – the RPG that has taken Japan and the US by storm. Namco is releasing the game on 25 June in Europe in special edition packages with an art book, strategy guide and soundtrack.



Bulletstorm Is New Game From Epic

Unreal Tournament creator, Epic Games, is teaming up with People Can Fly to bring *Bulletstorm* to PS3 in 2011. It's an over-the-top shooter with big guns and even bigger characters. Epic also announced a new *Gears Of War*, but we wouldn't care about that.



Capcom Confirms Marvel Vs Capcom 3

After the success of releasing *Marvel Vs Capcom 2* on PSN, Capcom has announced that a sequel will arrive in spring 2011. Capcom had been cagey about a sequel, but revealed *Marvel Vs Capcom 3: Fate Of Two Worlds* at its Captivate event last month.



PLAY TEAM TROPHIES

Things the Play team has achieved this month



PLATINUM: ALI

Managed to go for over a month without junk food, ran a 10k race and celebrated by eating a burger topped with a fried egg. That's a full-on win.



GOLD: DAN

In a Sub vs Sub battle of *FIFA World Cup* our man thrashed *X360*'s Olly Dean 10-0. It was a beating the likes of which none had witnessed before.



SILVER: IAN

He may have made an avatar of his head in *3D Dot Game Heroes*, but the crap cookies he brought back from the US count as a negative.



BRONZE: JON

Beat all comers in a *Blur* tournament hosted by Activision and won a Milkybar cow. We're unsure about the quality of his opposition, though.

BEGINS

have a big impact on your year. "E3 is a huge event and a very important milestone for the industry," Wilson said. "It's maybe more about media and public perception but if you set out your stall at E3 and it captures the imagination, then yes, there is a psychological boost that can carry through till all those products see the light of day."

Exactly what those products are Sony wouldn't reveal just yet, but rumours have been circling the web concerning a number of big-name titles making returns in the near future. First-party games like *Killzone*, *Resistance* and even *LittleBigPlanet* have been mentioned as potential E3 sequels, but Sony wouldn't be drawn on such speculation.

The future of the PSP is also a hot topic online at the moment, but Wilson would only confirm that there are "some really exciting titles lined up for PSP this year."

Interestingly Sony doesn't seem to be thinking of E3 in terms of besting the likes of Nintendo or Microsoft in the press conference wars. It just wants to put on the best show it can and give gamers what they want. "I suppose it is natural to want to shine among your peers and competitors but really for us it isn't about 'winning' the show," Wilson insisted. "Our strategy isn't guided by the competition, but by our own goals to offer the best we can in terms of great games and experiences, services and technology."

This Time It's War

This year's E3 will be no holds barred, thinks Jon Gordon

opinion



LAST YEAR'S E3 came as something of a surprise to me. I knew it was being taken a little more seriously

by publishers again and I knew that we could expect some announcements, but nothing on the scale of what arrived. Motion control and PSPgo were the big hitters for Sony, but the buzz around LA at the time was electric. Given all that, I fully expect this year to be even more explosive and that means Sony needs to step up its game.

In particular I think we need to see some big game announcements and reveals. Last year was about the tech and this year should be about the games. Sequels like *Killzone 3* and *Resistance 3* are expected now, so why not reveal them. Set firm dates for the release of *Gran Turismo* and *Last Guardian* worldwide.

And throw in some shock announcements like the rumoured sequels to *LittleBigPlanet* or *inFamous*? How about even outing David Jaffe's *Twisted Metal* game that he's been teasing for so long?

Then there's third-party exclusives that are getting so rare. Rockstar's *Agent* could well do with a reveal and would blow the

competition away if something could be cobbled together. Likewise some firm details for *Final Fantasy Versus XIII* would be welcome after fantastic sales of *FFXIII* on PS3 worldwide.

My greatest concern is that Sony will look at E3 as just one big platform to promote everything that the PS3 and PSP does, rather than as a hardcore gamers convention, which is what it used to be. Microsoft is holding a separate event for its Natal reveals, which would suggest a hardcore-only press event the next day. Eat up too much time talking about Move and Sony will lose time to big up its 2010 and 2011 releases.

"I fully expect this year to be even more explosive than last year"



Prince Among Men

Prince Of Persia wants to be back on top with Forgotten Sands

Ubisoft Montreal has told **Play** that it intends to use *The Forgotten Sands* to win back fans lost to games such as *God Of War*. The game is being released alongside Disney's film adaptation of *The Sands Of Time*, to which *Forgotten Sands* will act as a sequel.

"We lost all these fans," animation director Jan-Erik Sjovald said. "They played *Prince Of Persia* originally and then switched to *God Of War* or *Uncharted*. What we have to do now is hook them back into *POP* and get at least a few of

them back and hopefully gain a new audience through things like the film."

The game is in no way associated with the film or Ubisoft's last *POP* game, a reboot of the series that tried to take it in a new artistic direction. *Forgotten Sands* is an attempt to remind people what *POP* is all about says Sjovald. "Younger gamers probably don't know that when they play *Tomb Raider* that many things have been taken from *Sands Of Time*'s gameplay. We have to make it our own again and base it on our own strengths," he said.

Sjovald also admitted that Ubisoft's Montreal team had a tough time convincing everyone that the last game was the right way to go, but that *Forgotten Sands* is not an admission that 2008's rebooted game had failed. "We fought hard to get the game to the illustrative art style and as you can imagine our marketing guys did not like that," revealed Sjovald. "It has nothing to do with liking one game less or one game more. Sometimes that works and sometimes it doesn't, but that's all there is to it."

PLAYSTATION PRINCE The many faces of POP on PlayStation



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Royal Treatment

POP movie 'given purity' by series creator input

The presence of *POP* creator Jordan Mechner has helped Disney's adaptation of *The Sands Of Time* find its core according to the film's director Mike Newell. Speaking to **games™**, he said that while others tweaked the first script Mechner's original draft was at the project's heart.

"Having Jordy create the initial script gave the film purity, because it was in one pair of hands from the beginning," Newell

said. "Then, other people tweaked it and had a great creative effect on it."

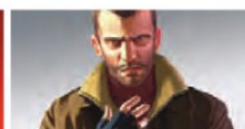
Mechner was keen to use the games as a template, but wanted to move away from their strict plots. "I pitched *Prince Of Persia* as a movie idea to Jerry Bruckheimer by putting together a trailer of game footage and I started telling him the story of the film," he said. "I said I wanted the movie to carry a different story to the game and he agreed."



QUESTION?

Is Red Dead Redemption Grand Theft Auto with horses?

THE EASIEST WAY to describe *Red Dead Redemption* is 'GTA with horses' but is that the most accurate way? We've decided to tackle this question in the most scientific way we know – breaking it down into five parts and writing a bit about each. You'll find the shocking conclusion at the bottom of this story...



Marston vs Bellic

Marston and Bellic may be from a different time and place, but they have their similarities. Both men have dark pasts and claim they want to put all that behind them, but keep getting dragged back in by everyone else.



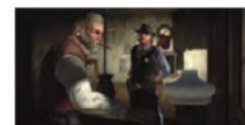
Old West vs Liberty City

Red Dead's world may not be as full as Liberty City, but there's still lots going on. Various animals roam the wilderness, and people of course, some of whom may require you to complete on-the-spot missions for them.



Horses vs Cars

One of the main things that makes *Red Dead* different to *GTA* is that it features little in the way of either grand theft or automobiles. There are a few cars in, but you'll mostly be travelling on horse.



Redemption vs Crime

Whereas Bellic gets drawn into crime, Marston is an ex-bandit who can, mostly, avoid breaking the law. That's partly because the law in the Old West is fuzzy, but also because he isn't necessarily a criminal any more.



Shoot-outs & Chases vs Shoot-outs & Chases

Both games feature a lot of shoot-outs and chases but these elements arguably sit more naturally in *Red Dead*. They look and feel just like the action scenes from classic Western movies.

ANSWER: A bit

FEARLESS NINJAS

Heavenly Sword creators "battle hardened" by PS3 development

Speaking exclusively to *Play*, Tameem Antoniades, chief design ninja at Ninja Theory, has insisted that his team no longer fears the PS3 as it once did and that despite the struggles it faced producing *Heavenly Sword* under a cloud of ill-feeling towards the PS3, it is stronger than ever. All of which bodes well for Ninja Theory's latest game, *Enslaved: Odyssey To The West*, which will be releasing on multiple formats later in the year.

"When we went into this project instead of starting from scratch with absolutely nothing we had a much clearer idea of what we wanted to do and how we could do it," Antoniades revealed to us. "The PS3 didn't scare us any more because we were so used to it so it's been a lot smoother."

There was huge pressure on us back then and that's why we've kept quite quiet

The atmosphere surrounding the early months of the PS3 may well have added to Ninja Theory's discomfort, as did the pressures of being one of the flagship titles of a new generation of games. "I think that a lot of the games that were announced back then were tainted by that negativity about the price of the console and the things that people were saying about it," Antoniades continued.

"There was enormous pressure on us back then and that's why we've kept quite quiet and [*Enslaved*] has stayed under the radar for as long as we could possibly keep it so that we could concentrate on making the game instead of making lots of demos. Every three to six months we were doing tech demos and it's a relief to be out of that."

REASONS WHY...

Enslaved is a game to watch

Read More...
Read our full Ninja Theory interview at www.play-mag.co.uk



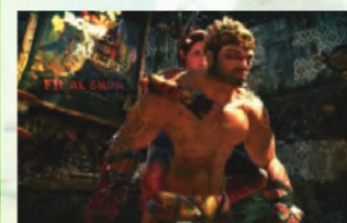
STAR POWER Ninja Theory is using talent from the film and music industry to help make its games, such as Alex Garland, writer of films such as *28 Days Later*, MOBO award-winning musician Nitin Sawhney and Andy Serkis.



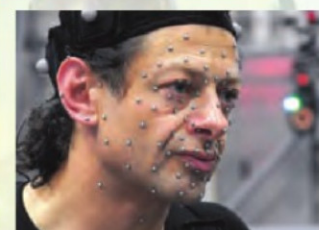
BEAUTIFUL WORLDS Whatever you think about *Heavenly Sword*, no one could deny that it was a lovely looking game with some wonderful scenery and from what we've seen it seems *Enslaved* is no different.



TRUE BRIT Ninja Theory is one of a number of bright British developers earning a name for itself in the world of videogames. Like Media Molecule, it is getting a reputation for experimental, but high quality game making.



DOUBLE JEOPARDY *Enslaved* is trying the tricky prospect of having you play with an AI partner from start to finish. By drawing on the influence of characters like Yorda in *Ico*, Ninja Theory may get the formula right.



MOTION CAPTURE Ninja Theory pioneered the use of detailed motion capture in *Heavenly Sword*. Quantic Dream and Rockstar have continued that trend with *Heavy Rain* and *LA Noire*.



Have Your Say

Tell us what you think about this story by writing to the usual address or visiting our forum

Crysis 2 to 'set new bar'

Crytek believes its latest will not be bettered graphically

In an exclusive conversation with *Play*, lead PlayStation programmer at Crytek Michael Glück has claimed that *Crysis 2* will push the PS3 to its limit and will not be beaten graphically by any game that follows. It's a bold claim, but one that is proving difficult to argue against as early images show that once again Crytek is pushing the HD boundaries.

"With each generation of game titles on PS3, usually every two years, the games improve significantly in its quality, mostly showing off in graphics," Glück told us. "I think with *Crysis 2*

you will see the quality bar being set at a very high level that games will struggle to excel. We're aiming to set a whole new benchmark with that game for all PS3 games."

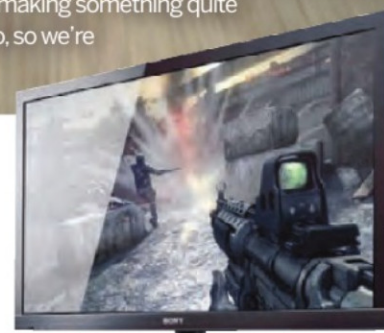
He still felt there would be room for improvement, though. "I expect more density of game elements, physics effect, more interaction, but the major graphics quality will not be significantly improved." A harsh assessment perhaps, but what do you think? Can *Crysis 2* live up to the hype and really be the best-looking game on PS3?

TESTING TIMES

Community drives Test Drive Unlimited forward



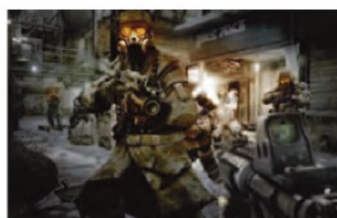
Test Drive Unlimited didn't make enough use of its community according to Eden Games' studio director David Nadal, but that's all about to change with its sequel. Speaking to **Play**, Nadal admitted that it could have done more to support the community for its first online racer. As it happens the developer was surprised by the support fans gave the game and says it has learnt lessons from the release. "We learnt that word of mouth is important and community is key," Nadal said. "We weren't able to support the *TDU* community as much as we wanted, but they were there and supported the title. They're still playing it today and we've been listening a lot. We wanted to improve the ability for the community to play together, which wasn't easy in the first game." Those who got into *TDU* gave it their wholehearted support and despite some of its groundbreaking features Nadal admitted that even that was a surprise. "To be very transparent we were very surprised at the reaction of the players," he revealed. "We know that we were making something quite unique, but didn't know how much so, so we're really happy to see it worked."



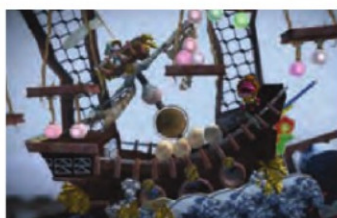
3D Games Wishlist

Sony 3DTVs coming this June with games support

SONY HAS CONFIRMED that the first in its range of 3DTVs will hit the UK this June along with three free PS3 games. The BRAVIA HX803 will be available in 40 and 46-inch models, will come with two pairs of 3D glasses and *Wipeout HD*, *Pain* and *Super Stardust* in 3D, plus a 3D demo of *MotorStorm: Pacific Rift*. However, that just got us thinking about what other PS3 games we'd like to see given a 3D reboot.



KILLZONE 2 – Greater depth of field mixed with *Killzone*'s superb visuals would look stunning. It'd be like looking through a window into Helghan.



LITTLEBIGPLANET – With its three tiers of depth, being able to play *LBP* in 3D would make a lot of sense. In 3D you could see what you're doing better.



GRAN TURISMO 5 – We've already seen some demos of *GT* in 3D and it looks stunning. With a release imminent you should expect more news on this soon.



HEAVY RAIN – Its fixed camera positions and Jayden's ARI system would both work really well in 3D. Motion control sounds like the priority, though.



3D DOT GAME HEROES – Quite apart from being able to add another 3D to the title, this would look even better in 3D, stretching back into your TV.

YOUR SAY

From Infinity To Beyond

What games would you like to see from Respawn Entertainment?

EX-INFINITY WARD CHIEFS Jason West and Vince Zampella, the leadership duo that oversaw the creation of the record-breaking *MW2*, have set up a new studio called Respawn Entertainment. It's rare that a brand-new studio would hit the ground with so much expectation, but given West and Zampella's past achievements and EA backing the team, gamers are excited about what they might cook up. But what would you like to see from the studio?

They should still stay in FPS because that's where their excellent experience lies, but they should try a completely new angle within the genre, as hard as that sounds – **the bossman**

I wanna play as a Russian badass with an AK47 fighting zombies – **Mr healey**

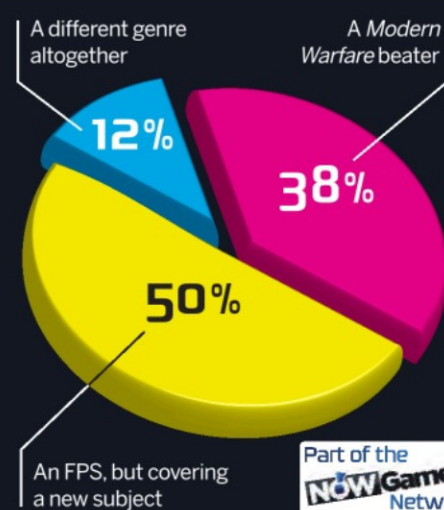
I want them to make a really good zombie shooter, like just straight zombie killing, no power-ups or magicians making you guns. You have to look through bodies to find guns

and ammo and make it really dark and dingy and last but not least make the zombies extremely realistic, hire every single game artist and make the freakiest looking zombies in the world – **skrudge7**

A sci-fi FPS, please – **Akuma**

I really like the look of what *Medal Of Honor* are doing, something along those lines would be fun, but maybe set in Australia or somewhere like that – **Alexius1212**

Join the Play Nation by signing up to our forum at www.play-mag.co.uk/forum



True Crime intends to go in a different direction to GTA.

STAT ATTACK
1.5 million
copies of Heavy Rain expected to be sold by end of 2010

'WE'RE NOT AFTER GTA'

True Crime not competing with Rockstar says producer

True Crime's executive producer Stephen van der Mescht has told **Play** that he has no intention of taking on *Grand Theft Auto* for the open-world crown and would rather make a completely different kind of open-world game for you to explore.

"The exercise has not been to sit down and ask 'how do we beat *GTA*?', van der Mescht said. "What those guys have accomplished from *Grand Theft Auto III* are things that no one else has done. We've worked on other open-world games and for us it was less about being better and more about being different."

The original games were often criticised for being too similar to *GTA*, despite the fact that on both occasions you were a cop. The new *True Crime* places its hero, Wei Shen, in an undercover scenario, justifying a little more criminal behaviour, but that's where United Front hopes the similarities with *GTA* will end.

"I think this game will play differently to any other open-world game," van der Mescht insisted. "Just from a character capability standpoint, the fighting system is five times deeper than any other open-world game out there with the range of abilities that you have."

YOUR SAY

Can True Crime take on the big boys?

56% – Yes
44% – No

Join the Play Nation at
www.play-mag.co.uk/forum

RECORD BREAKERS

Our favourite gaming records, as Ubisoft and Activision grab awards

GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS has seen fit to award *MW2* with a record for being the most successful entertainment launch of all time (it made \$401 million in 24 hours). *Assassin's Creed II* has also been praised for getting the most covers of any single game in a 12-month period (127 covers in total). Can't really argue with either of those, but we like these the best:

Longest Videogame Development Period: **DUKE NUKEM FOREVER** – It still hasn't come out, so we're guessing this one just keeps getting awarded annually.

First Third-Person Shooter Exclusively Made For Co-op Play: **ARMY OF TWO** – But you can still play it on your own, so it's only a little bit exclusive.

Longest Delay Between Videogame Instalments: **BIONIC COMMANDO** – Delay makes it sound like Capcom was umming and ahing about it. Not sure that's true.

Longest Draw Distance In A Racing Game: **FUEL** – You can see more stuff going on in the background than in any other background in gaming history!

Most Official Real-Life Stand-Ins For A Videogame Character: **LARA CROFT** – Or proof positive that paying for models is a good use of advertising budget.

Records courtesy of the Guinness World Records 2010 Gamer's Edition available to buy now.

LIMITED EDITION
ONLY 40 MADE

WIN Kasumi and copy of DOA: Paradise

Saucy statue and five copies of PSP game up for grabs

TECMO KOEI HAS brought its special blend of beachwear, mini-games and voyeurism to PSP recently with the release of *Dead Or Alive: Paradise*. It's a game that attempts to capture the weird and wonderful world of 'gravure' and 'idol' culture in Japan, mixing it with all your favourite female stars from the *Dead Or Alive* fighter series. Five lucky entrants who answer the following question correctly will receive a copy of the game and one lucky winner will also get a Kasumi statue.

WHAT IS THE PROPER NAME FOR A FEMALE NINJA?

To submit your answer, simply email play@imagine-publishing.co.uk with the subject heading 'DOA Paradise Comp'. Please include your full name and address. The closing date for entries is **10 June 2010**.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS All entrants must be 18 years old or over. To submit your answer, simply email play@imagine-publishing.co.uk with the subject line 'DOA Paradise Comp'. The closing date for entries is 10 June 2010. Please be aware that answers must be submitted to the above email address only, and any left through the comments section of our website will be automatically disqualified. This competition is open to residents of the United Kingdom and Ireland. Imagine Publishing has the right to substitute the prize for a similar item of equal or higher value. Employees of Imagine Publishing (including freelancers), their relatives, or any agents are not eligible to enter. The editor's decision is final, and no correspondence will be entered into. Prizes cannot be exchanged for cash. Full terms and conditions are available upon request. From time to time, Imagine Publishing or its agents may send you related material or special offers. If you do not want to receive this, please state it clearly on your competition entry.

Hunted is set to be a next-gen version of a classic dungeon crawler.

Hunted: The Demon's Forge

Q&A

InXile's Matt Findley and Michael 'Maxx' Kaufman tell us about their upcoming dungeon crawling action adventure

Is *Hunted* something of a passion project for you guys?

MF: We'd been talking about wanting to do *Hunted* for years. It was always a goal of ours to someday re-imagine the dungeon crawler by taking today's state-of-the-art action games, the best technology we could get and what we remembered as being cool from those games and mix it together into a new

It's all about you sharing a game experience with your friends

product. We spent about six months thinking about it and did the deal with Bethesda and we've been working on the game for about two years.

Do you think there's something about the dungeon crawler genre that makes it eternally attractive?

MF: Without even worrying about what the gameplay was, whether it was role-playing or whatever, there were just emotions that those games evoked that I don't think we're seeing games hit on the same notes. It was those emotional notes that definitely inspired us to combine these deep, rich, fantasy worlds with the modern action game.

MK: I think it was just the idea of being able to see this incredible dungeon, but at a really fast pace going through it and seeing what happens to you. That was

the visceral experience that was very compelling to all of us.

So we take it you had no interest in making a more traditional, stat-heavy RPG in this world?

MF: Visceral is the word and if you look at the vision document for the product you'll see the word visceral on it a lot. That was one of our goals. There are elements of RPGs that you'll find in it, but it's more about how we present the world, how we tell the story, the

concept of the player starting out weak and getting stronger, but the nuts and bolts of it will be invisible to the player.

If you look at *BioShock* I don't think anyone realised playing it that they were playing an RPG, but if you really look at the nuts and bolts of how it worked and how you got more powerful, it is. It was about having the elements that we liked from that type of product, but weaving them into a fast-paced action game.

When we think about the inspiration that came from pen and paper D&D, those were co-op games. You had a Dungeon Master and we're inside thinking about what spells we can use and we knew we wanted to have that element. Social networking is the buzzword of the decade, right? Well, it's all about you hanging out with your friends sharing a game experience.

There's still a levelling system in there for the characters, though. How does that work?

MF: If I take just one character as an example, Elara, her speciality is the bow and she can use crystals to acquire special bow skills and then make it more powerful. With the ice crystal she can shoot and freeze an enemy, but she can add more crystals to make the spell last longer before the enemy breaks out. Her melee attack doesn't have that skill tree associated with it, but she can find new weapons that will make her a little bit more powerful. Caddoc is exactly the opposite with the melee and the ranged attacks switched, but they both have

equal magic ability, but with their own unique spells.

MK: If you're playing as Elara she'll have abilities she can unlock that will allow her to carry more arrows and things associated with her ranged speciality, while Caddoc will have abilities like attacking from cover. Another aspect of the system is that when you find a crystal it's for both characters, so if I find one crystal, I've really found two. They're tied to the character, though, so you can't combine them and spend them all on one character.

MF: We kind of force you to move both characters down their progression paths.



Characters have their own special abilities that can be powered up by collecting crystals.

Hei\$t Iced

InXile 'hasn't heard from Codemasters in years'

WHILE NOT WANTING to go into too much detail on the subject, InXile's Matt Findley and Maxx Kaufman revealed that while they had been working with Codemasters on *Hei\$t*, the project has been shelved. "We were going to wait for you to bring it up," Kaufman joked as we raised the subject. "We're not really talking about it other than saying we stopped working on it several years ago," added Findley. "We don't know what happened. We haven't heard from that publisher in several years."

They wouldn't be drawn on the reasons for the cancellation of *Hei\$t*, but were at least drawing on the positives of having spent so much time working with the Unreal engine, even if there was no end product. "We never stopped working with the Unreal tech for the last five years, which is what allowed us to be able to deliver the graphics levels we got into *Hunted*," Findley explained.



Time spent on *Hei\$t* helped InXile get to grips with the Unreal engine.

The Lara Croft Experiment

Downloadable games to be breaks between big Tomb Raider releases

Speaking exclusively to **Play**, Crystal Dynamics has revealed how it came to develop its first downloadable title and what it means for the future of the *Tomb Raider* franchise. *Lara Croft And The Guardian Of Light* is the developer's first downloadable game and will be coming to PSN this summer. According to Crystal Dynamic's global brand director Karl Stewart the studio has really changed since releasing *Tomb Raider: Underworld*.

"Over the last 18 months we've gone through massive changes in the studio," Stewart told us. "We finished off the trilogy with *Underworld* coming to an end and with that we stepped back as a studio and asked, 'what are we going to do?'" The result was a period of experimentation that resulted in a completely new style of game for Lara Croft.

We went through this cool experimental phase where we tried loads of new things

"We went through this cool experimental phase where we tried loads of new things and we ended up about a year ago putting our stick in the sand and saying, 'this is it, we want to enter into the digital space,'" he said, but insisted that doesn't mean the end of the *Tomb Raider* brand or games.

"*Tomb Raider* as an IP is in our DNA at Crystal Dynamics now," Stewart insisted. "Going forward we're going to make sure we do a phenomenal job. Our goal was that in-between those pillar releases we would create something for the fans that was new and different."

You can read our first impression of *Lara Croft And The Guardian Of Light* on page 62.



Charts

Cataloguing everything that's big in the world of PlayStation

PS3 CHART

1	God Of War III Sony	The grouchy one retains his crown and frankly we're not expecting him to lose it for some time.	88%
2	Battlefield: Bad Company 2 EA	Fan appreciation has seen <i>BC2</i> shoot up the ranks and top <i>MW2</i> . Good to see it on the rise.	93%
3	Episodes From Liberty City Rockstar	You can't stop PS3 owners from falling all over new <i>GTA</i> content and this is good stuff.	94%
4	Just Cause 2 Square Enix	<i>Just Cause 2</i> holds strong as its mad-cap sandbox action continues to wow the crowds.	87%
5	Super Street fighter IV Capcom	Boosted by its strong following, <i>Street Fighter</i> enters the charts in an aggressive mood.	90%
6	FIFA 10 EA	The release of a <i>World Cup</i> may see <i>FIFA 10</i> decline, but we don't expect it to be away for long.	90%
7	Modern Warfare 2 Activision	<i>MW2</i> in decline? We expect it to leap a little with the release of the DLC this month.	94%
8	Heavy Rain Sony	It's falling down the charts, but <i>Heavy Rain</i> is still being hailed as a success by David Cage and Sony.	94%
9	Final Fantasy XIII Square Enix	Now that everyone's got to that bit where the game opens out we expect it to rise next month.	85%
10	Uncharted 2 Sony	The continued presence of Drake in this list is proof of how good <i>Uncharted 2</i> is.	96%

PSP CHART

1	LittleBigPlanet Sony	There's no moving Sackboy this month. Will Sony heed this support and announce more <i>LBP</i> soon.	90%
2	FIFA 10 EA	People still love their football on the go, which makes it a greater shame this game wasn't better.	NA%
3	Invizimals Sony	The Easter break had a big impact on <i>Invizimals</i> sales as did anticipation of a new <i>Pokemon</i> possibly.	71%
4	James Cameron's Avatar Ubisoft	<i>Avatar</i> is still showing in a lot of cinemas. Because of that many still want to play the game.	NA%
5	Gran Turismo Sony	Still no sign of <i>GT5</i> , so we have to keep on satisfying our hardcore racing sim itch on the PSP instead.	85%

*This chart is compiled from sales, our opinions and the games you're playing. If you're playing a recent, quality title that isn't on our chart, head on over to the forum and let us know about it.

INSTANT EXPERT

All of the pros with none of the prose



DOS & DON'TS

Important lessons from Play this month

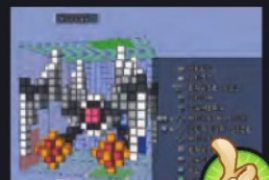
DO: Play *Split/Second* with a surround-sound system to get the most from its awesome dynamic music and sound effects.



DON'T: Underestimate Emile Heskey in 2010 FIFA World Cup. He may not be the best rated player, but his strength is immense.



DO: Create your own character in *3D Dot Game Heroes* for extra hilarity. Oh, and remember to use that first spell you learn.



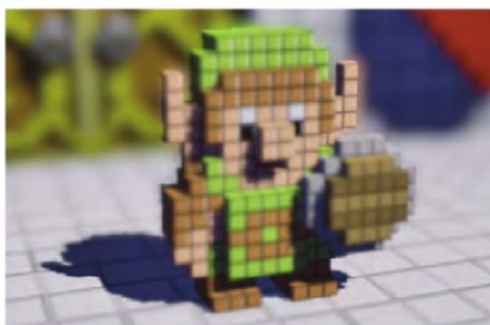
DON'T: Play *Lost Planet 2* on your own. We wouldn't go so far as to say it's broken, but it's definitely not as good.



Read our reviews of all these games starting on page 72

PLAY CREATES, SHARES WITH... 3D DOT GAME HEROES

This month's Play creations from the big games on PS3



LINK – A hero from another age, but since *3D Dot Game Heroes* owes so much to this guy we thought it was only right that he make an appearance. Working out what his nose should look like was trickier than we imagined, though.



PAC-MAN – There can't be a more famous spherical gaming hero around and bringing him to this RPG made a lot of sense. Trying to make something that looks like a sphere using only cubes is tricky, though. We could've done better.



SPACE INVADERS – We were going to have one big space invader, but thought it would be funnier to have a bunch flying around together in a group. For pure comedy value this was probably our favourite.

Read our 3D Dot Game Heroes review on page 88

Made something cool in a game?

Send an image to play@imagine-publishing.co.uk and share it with the world

● A number of Square Enix developers answering fans' questions in Japan.



JAPANESE GAMERS GET SPOILED

Lucky gamers in Japan can easily meet their heroes

OUR MAN IN JAPAN

PlayStation pondering from the East

Game writers like myself tend to be a somewhat spoiled lot. True, the job is about writing first and games second, but we get to meet the people who make our favourite games. It's something that not many can do. For most gamers, developers might as well live in lofty ivory towers on a mythical continent. For most British gamers, that

Game writers like myself tend to be a somewhat spoiled lot

is. In Japan, fans often have the chance to meet, albeit briefly, with their favourite game makers. Despite the fact that many Japanese companies operate in relative secrecy, compared to their Western counterparts, there are more game conventions and events in Japan than anywhere else in the world.

Why so many? Japan is a country roughly the size of the UK, with three times the population. That density has forced the country to develop a very efficient domestic transit system. That same density also means that there are so many hardcore gamers in Japan's cities that special events are an economic way of promoting games.

Look at it this way: there are no major gaming conventions in the UK. The nearest annual convention in Europe is gamescom in Cologne. If you want to go to this year's event in August, it's going to

cost you. Air travel within Europe may be cheap compared to Japanese domestic travel, but you'll still have to worry about where to stay once you arrive. Even if I lived hours away from the nearest airport, on Japan's least densely populated island, Hokkaido, I could have attended this year's FFXI blowout, VanaFest, in Tokyo on short notice. If I booked my time wisely, I could even have done it in a day.

Publishers often make large announcements at these events. Square Enix announced the Beta for *Final Fantasy XIV* at the aforementioned VanaFest. At

this year's *Street Fighter IV* national championship, Capcom revealed that *Super Street Fighter IV* would be getting an arcade release (in Japan only). In April, Kojima Productions announced the

accomplishment of *Metal Gear Solid: Peace Walker*, at its 'game completion ceremony.' In order to allow fan participation, the company let in select members of the public to live-Tweet the event. Kojima himself tends to be very public; he held an event at the Apple store in Tokyo's trendy Ginza neighbourhood last year where he talked about his path into the games industry and took questions from the audience.

There are more game events open to the public in Japan than anywhere else in the world, and the compact nature of the country when combined with its excellent transit system allows gamers from even the most remote parts of the country the chance to participate. While it's true that none of the events (save TGS) are the size of a PAX or a gamescom, their convenience and frequency more than make up for their lack of size.



● Have you always wanted to meet your favourite game makers? You can in Japan.

EASTERN BITES



Beat M Bison one-handed

Bandai recently began selling a new line of toys in Tokyo stores. Delusional Controller is a basic D-pad and two-button controller with a speaker. Inside the controller is a mini-version of a classic game – *SFII*, *Xevious* or *RBI Baseball* – but no display. Players try to beat the game through sound alone. Controllers cost around £6.



Final Fantasy IX on PSN

Square Enix personnel have hinted at the impending release of *Final Fantasy IX* on PSN for weeks. The news was finally confirmed for Japan on 2 April. While Japan always gets these PSN releases first, they never fail to come to Europe.



Yakuza 4 tops 500,000

Before UK gamers could get their hands on *Yakuza 3*, Sega released *Yakuza 4* in Japan. The game was the bestselling game for the week of its release and Sega announced that it shipped over 500,000 copies of the game in Japan.

OBJECTS OF DESIRE

The toys, trinkets and tailoring that has our fires burning this month

Sackboy Controller Holder

£27.99 at Play.com

When you come home after a hard day you want to be greeted with kind offerings from those you love. So who better than Sackboy to do just that by passing you your PS3 pad? At least he won't judge you for spending so much time playing games.



Kratos T-Shirt

£11.99 at HMV

With the release of *God Of War III* and the new HD collection dazzling gamers nationwide, now seems the perfect time to sport Kratos on your chest. Rather than scrawling a crude etching of the man-god on your bare skin (like we've been doing for all these years) just pull on this new *GOW*-shirt and escape (fashion) hell.

Ghostbusters Minimates

\$14.99 at ThinkGeek.com

These things are selling out pretty fast so you may want to get your skates on if you like what you see. The Venkman, Spengler, Dana Barrett and Louis Tully set has already gone so only the Stanz, Zeddemore, Gozer and Stay-Puft set is currently available, but you should dare to be different. Chasing after Bill Murray is too obvious.



Kick-Ass Figures

\$14.99 each at BigBadToyStore.com

It's one of the hottest movies to hit screens since those blue folk finally decided to call it quits and with good reason. *Kick-Ass* is deliriously and deliberately weird, violent and funny. Plus, it's got a game exclusively on PS3, so why not fly your hero colour high with these figures?

Bayonetta Action Figure

£32.99 at Play.com

This fantastically detailed figure of Sega's latest heroine supreme comes from the talented bunch at Play Arts who have made a number of excellent videogame figures in the past. This is easily their finest work to date, though, given the complexity of the character they were making.



People-Go-Round

£15.59 at MySoti.com

There's something a little bit twisted about this image, but that's what makes it so riveting. Why are elephants on a merry-go-round? Why not horses? Who knows?

MySoti
15% OFF
these great T-shirts

This Month's Code:
PlayGear192

Storm In A Teacup

£21.56 at MySoti.com

This homage to *The Great Wave Off Kanagawa* is the kind of thing **Play** enjoys the most. East meets West on our chests.



CONDITIONS: Enter discount code when placing order. MySoti.com discount code only valid on featured items between 13 May and 9 June. Visit MySoti.com for even more great T-shirts.

IN FOCUS

Things to see and do before the next issue of Play arrives



Red Dead Redemption

Developer: Rockstar San Diego **Publisher:** Rockstar **Release Date:** 21 May
A VAST OPEN world filled to bursting point with bandits, rogues, wolves, thieves and grizzly bears, *Red Dead Redemption* is promising to be so much more than just 'Grand Theft Stagecoach'. San Diego has done a great job of trying to fill in those open spaces that the Wild West dictates for it, but importantly it's full of fun missions and side quests. We've enjoyed everything we've seen of it so far and we're keeping our fingers very firmly crossed that it can live up to our rather high expectations. Keep an eye on Play-Mag.co.uk for our review closer to launch.

Prince Of Persia: The Sands Of Time

Distributor: Walt Disney Pictures **Director:** Mike Newell
Release Date: 21 May

WE'RE NOT EXACTLY filled to the brim with confidence when it comes to the Bruckheimer/Disney adaptation of *Prince Of Persia*. It will have the budget and support of a proper summer blockbuster, but given the history of videogame films and the way *Pirates Of The Caribbean* went, we remain cautious.



Bionic

Artist: Christina Aguilera **Label:** RCA Records
Release Date: 7 June

A QUICK TEAM poll found that none of the **Play** team are die-hard Aguilera fans, which was a surprise. We suspect that someone was lying. Anyway, her latest album is apparently a mix of her different styles, from R&B to pop, but then they kind of became the same thing a while back.

FA Cup Final

Why: It's the final match of the tournament **Where:** Wembley Stadium, London **When:** 15 May

IT'S THE BIG day. The cup final that every player wishes he could play in. This year sees Chelsea go head-to-head with the underdogs of Portsmouth, but there can be only one winner once the teams step out onto Wembley's terrible turf. Who will be victorious? We'll know soon enough.



The Karate Kid

Studio: Sony Pictures **Director:** John G Avildsen **Release Date:** 7 June

APPARENTLY THERE'S A remake of *The Karate Kid* on the way starring Jackie Chan and Jaden Smith, the son of Will Smith and Jada Pinkett Smith (the one from the bad *Matrix* sequels, poor lass). But, while you're left reeling from that news why not enjoy the original in glorious high definition?

Out This Month

For a full rundown of the release dates of every PlayStation game visit www.nowgamer.com/release-dates

Visit **NOWGamer**

FRIDAY 14 MAY



3D Dot Game Heroes

SouthPeak Games

PS3 £39.99

Best Price: £28.73 from TheHut.com

The kind of game that makes us go all giddy with delight but ends up selling about seven copies because you're all so ignorant, damnit!



Pure Football

Ubisoft

PS3 £29.99

Best Price: £24.99 from Game.co.uk

A few years back it would have been laughable to call a budget-priced footy title a potential *Pro Evo* beater, but these days you never know...



Skate 3

EA

PS3 £49.99

Best Price: £31.99 from JackOfAllGames.co.uk

The third game in the *Skate* series is here to wash away the pain of playing *Tony Hawk: Ride*. Hopefully forever.

FRIDAY 21 MAY



Backbreaker

505 Games

PS3 £39.99

Best Price: £29.99 from Game.co.uk

In the UK, this unofficial American football title is exclusive to Game. It uses Euphoria, the same physics engine as *Grand Theft Auto IV*.



ModNation Racers

Sony

PS3 £49.99

Best Price: £37.99 from GamePlay.co.uk

The creation tools aren't quite as powerful as in *LittleBigPlanet*, but you could still call this *LittleBigPlanet* with kart racing.



Prince Of Persia: The Forgotten Sands

Ubisoft

PS3 £49.99

Best Price: £31.99 from JackOfAllGames.co.uk

The *Prince Of Persia* series does the sensible thing and returns to the template that made *Sands Of Time* so great.



Red Dead Redemption

Rockstar Games

PS3 £49.99

Best Price: £31.99 from JackOfAllGames.co.uk

GTA in the Wild West? Well, sort of, yes. There's no auto theft, though, grand or otherwise. But you can steal horses and stagecoaches and maybe even a train.



Split/Second: Velocity

Disney Interactive

PS3 £49.99

Best Price: £34.85 from ShopTo.net

Brilliant arcade racing game in which you make parked vehicles, towering structures and even cliffs explode into and/or collapse onto your opponents.

FRIDAY 28 MAY



Alpha Protocol

Sega

PS3 £44.99

Best Price: £32.99 from GamePlay.co.uk

An espionage thriller RPG from Obsidian Games, who is also responsible for developing *Fallout: New Vegas*, don't you know?



Blur

Activision

PS3 £49.99

Best Price: £37.93 from LoveFilm.com

This action-racer is going to have its work cut out impressing us now that we've played *Split/Second: Velocity*, but it is looking pretty tasty in its own right.

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AND FINALLY...

Where hype and hyperbole are welcome

CRUSHING YOUR FANTASIES

Playing girls for money in possible rip-off shocker

THEY SAY: New gamers' networking/dating site GameCrush.com is not only exploitative but also a rip-off, with girls charging up to \$6.60 per ten minutes play (approx £4.33). This could lead to huge amounts of money being spent on lengthy gaming sessions. What's more the profiles of the 'hot girls' you're supposed to be playing are dubious at best with some clients claiming that the profiles of some of the girls on GameCrush are clearly models or even porn stars. Worst of all these girls

have no proof of their gaming credentials and could be

rubbish. However, it proved so popular that the site's servers were overwhelmed by interest at launch.

WE SAY: A website that offers you a 'play date' with a 'hot girl gamer' a rip-off!? We're not sure we know what all the controversy is here. Regardless of whether you're being asked to pay £26 an hour or £5 an hour, the ultimate intention of parting male gamers with more testosterone than sense from their cash remains the same. It's not as though you can get a lot of gaming done in ten minutes, although there are a few other things you may be able to do. Compared to some chat lines it's actually quite reasonable... not that we'd know about that.

WARNING!
GRATUITOUS IMAGE
OF WOMAN NOT
ACTUALLY PLAYING
GAMES

stop
please



Death of a console

THEY SAY: According to *Metal Gear* creator Hideo Kojima, the age of the console will soon come to an end. "Gamers should be able to take the experience with them... wherever they are and whenever they want to play."

WE SAY: We like the idea of getting to take our games wherever we go, but that seems a long way off right now.



Sony bricking phats

THEY SAY: The most recent PS3 update, 3.21, which took away Linux compatibility, has also started causing faults with original PS3 systems with the intention of forcing gamers to buy the new Slim version of the platform.

WE SAY: Err, no. There could well be issues with some of the older PS3s, but there's no way it was deliberate.



Guitar over games

THEY SAY: White Stripes guitarist Jack White has said budding musicians should quit games. "They need to quit playing videogames, throw away their Auto-Tune program and cut three strings off their guitar," he told *NME*.

WE SAY: If you want to be a serious musician chances are you'll need to cut back on your gaming time, but we doubt White meant it that way.

GAMES OF WAR

Military atrocity in Iraq compared to gamer behaviour

THEY SAY: A video showing footage from a US Apache helicopter, which mistook Iraqi civilians for insurgent fighters, has seen the behaviour of the chopper crew compared to that of a gamer chasing a high score. WikiLeaks, who released the video, felt that the language and disengaged nature of the soldiers as well as the brutality of the attack was like something out of a videogame. The scene has drawn a number of comparisons with *Call Of Duty 4*'s Death From Above level in which gamers were asked to protect SAS troops with an AC-130.

WE SAY: The kind of combat that puts a big distance between you and your target is sure to create a sense of disengagement with those you're attacking. However, ultimately, this seems to have been an honest, if utterly tragic mistake. There have been suggestions that videogames, by becoming more like real-life war, could help show up the poor quality of military surveillance in such circumstances.



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Sometimes all you need is 140 characters to get your message across, so why not follow the

Play team on their Twitter feeds to get all the latest news, opinions and gossip as it happens from the **Play** office? Get immediate reactions to the newest games being reviewed, links to cool features and all the other weird thoughts and ideas Keith, Gavin, Jon and Ian have to share. You can find links to each of their Twitter accounts at Play-Mag.co.uk or go direct with @PlayMagKeith, @PlayMagGav, @PlayMagJon or @PlayMagIan.

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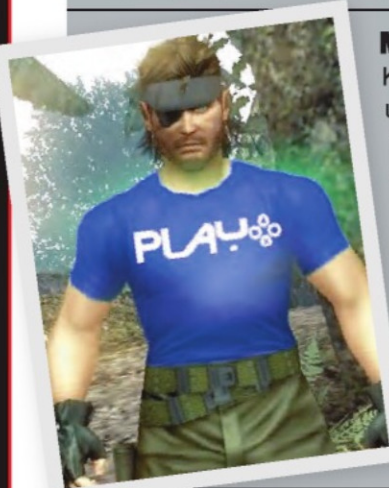
Reload

The very best of the Play Blog this month



Alternate endings: Modern Warfare 2

Ever wondered what it'd be like if Sgt Jackson hadn't died in *COD 4* and had masterminded everything in *MW2* or if Ghost was actually a Ghost all along? No? Well, check out the blog where we found out for you.



MGS advertising

Konami has teamed up with some brands to advertise in *Peace Walker*, but we thought we'd come up with more appropriate partners for Naked Snake than Mountain Dew and Uniqlo. Specsavers, Gillette and **Play** sprang to mind.



What do Heavy Rain sales mean?

Play probed the figures to find out what really made Quantic Dream's latest game such a success and whether it means the games industry is really growing up in the way David Cage envisions.



Things we'd do differently: Medal Of Honor

So *Medal Of Honor* is going all modern to give it a fresh start, but would it be better if it went back to medieval times or was set in Lego Land instead of Afghanistan? We think so and we explained why on the blog.



GOW III vs Heavenly Sword

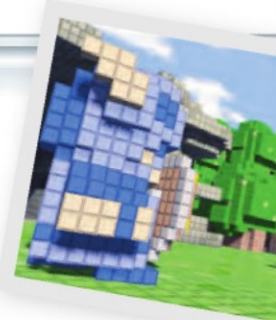
We explored the ways in which *Heavenly Sword* might actually be better than *God Of War III*. Not surprisingly it was a discussion that proved rather controversial, leading some to call us Xbox fanboys for suggesting such a thing.

"If you really want to get involved in playing with a camera I suggest you go out and buy a \$99 PlayStation 2 and play some of the great technology we invented eight years ago" – Sony's Jack Tretton talks Project Natal in our '7 Best 'Arrogant' Sony Quotes'.



Real time: Street Fighter

The original gang from *Street Fighter II* head out for a meal as we take games and place them in the real world. Much hilarity ensues as Dhalsim serves the drinks, everyone confuses Balrog with M Bison and Ken refuses to add a tip to the bill. He's so cheap.





LucasArts photo diary

As part of our coverage of *Force Unleashed III* Ian went to LucasArts studios in San Francisco. As a teaser he posted up a photo diary of his trip so you can see some of the studio and its *Star Wars* memorabilia.



Greener grass: MadWorld

We're not so blinkered to the world outside PlayStation that the odd game can't impress us on another platform and with the forthcoming *Move* we're getting excited about playing *MadWorld* on the PS3.



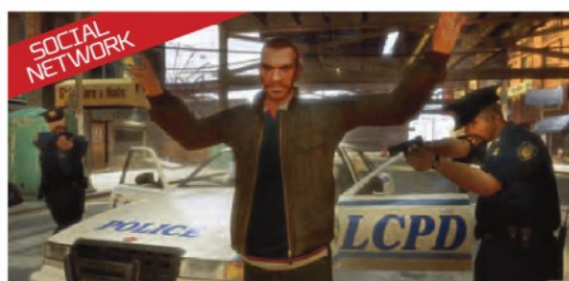
Alternate endings: God Of War III

Could Kratos and Zeus have actually been lovers and not father and son? What if Kratos had just had a nice warm bath rather than going out for a brawl all those years ago? These ideas and more are explored as we look at different ways the trilogy could have ended.



Our favourite save point

Things don't have to be big or clever to impress us and the save system in *GTA: Vice City* is a prime example of this. Saving your game on a bright pink cassette tape was just one example of its Eighties joy.



Twitter feed: Niko Bellic

We tried to get into the head of Niko Bellic of *GTA IV* fame this month by re-creating a likely social networking feed for him. Turns out the real world isn't as kind to Niko as Liberty City was in the game. Murder is a serious thing.

"People all over the world are playing this game that have never seen UFC, but as they're playing they are learning about the various submissions and holds as well as who the fighters are"

— Dana White, president of UFC, on the blog.



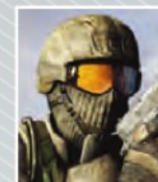
Our favourite character creator

3D Dot Game Heroes has really captured our imaginations as well as our hearts and this was no more evident than when Gavin managed to re-create his world-renowned Gladiator persona for the game. It was the cutest version of Gavin we've ever seen.

word on the tweet

The wild ramblings and opinions of Tweeting game developers revealed!

Demize99



The problem with open world games is that they just have more bugs than you can hope to ever fix.

Battlefield: Bad Company 2 senior designer Alan Kertz is finding some issues with *Just Cause 2* it would seem.

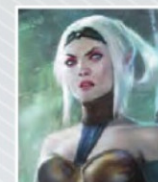
TimOfLegend



The mice got into my collection of *PaRappa The Rapper* gum. We lost it all! Mice, you gotta believe... that I will have my revenge.

Tim Schafer feels the loss of a unique piece of PlayStation memorabilia.

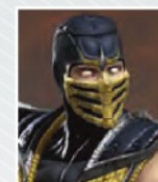
JoshDrescher



Why does our audio director never approve of my place-holder voiceover acting? I was doing my BEST Shatner voice.

BioWare producer Josh Drescher finds his ambitions to be a voice actor scorned.

noobde



Today I made Ryu & Ken's uppercut invincible again. Old school. Tomorrow I'll make Guile RULE SF again, SONIC BOON MFers!

Mortal Kombat creator Ed Boon finds there's still fun to be had with the competition.

ian_cummings



Finally beat *GOW III*. Some stuff at the end let me down but overall: A+. Playing the collection now, starting with *GOW I*.

Even Madden NFL 11 creative director Ian Cummings is getting in on the Kratos action.

DuvalMagic



I can't explain exactly why, but I've been playing through *WET*.

Gearbox president Randy Pitchford confesses his sins to the world via Twitter. We can't explain his actions either. We're ashamed of him.

DoktorZee



Is amazed at the combination of artistry and absurdity in *Bayonetta*. And all those sassy moments too.

Greg Zeschuk, BioWare vice president, couldn't resist the catsuited witch for long, much like the rest of us.

PLAY³ Investigates

The inside scoop on everything PlayStation

TAKING THE LEAD

The PlayStation 3 is now becoming the lead platform of choice for developers. Play asked around some of the world's leading third-party game makers to find out how this shift in the balance of power came about

Portal 2 has been announced and we're rather disappointed, but not surprised, that a PS3 version of Valve's sequel to the show-stealing *Orange Box* game has been conspicuous by its absence. Valve has long said that it finds PS3 development too difficult and cumbersome to be cost-effective and for a long time many developers agreed. Again and again the ease of moving from the last generation of hardware or from PC development to Xbox 360 meant that the PS3 got a ported version, often to the detriment of the final product. Valve it seemed was right. The PS3 and its unique Cell processing architecture was simply too hard to make games for.

However, times have changed. With the release of games like *LittleBigPlanet* pushing what is believed to be possible in terms of user-generated content and *Killzone 2* and *Uncharted 2* pushing back the boundaries expected from

videogame graphics, the PS3 began to come into its own. That's all well and good from first-party developers backed by Sony money and expertise, but the independent and third-party game developers are also beginning to reap the benefits of PS3. Shinji Mikami's *Vanquish* has been confirmed as using the PS3 as its lead platform and EA is following suit with the development of its *Medal Of Honor* reboot.

According to *Final Fantasy XIII* producer Yoshinori Kitase, the challenge that the PS3 sets developers is an exciting one of just how far they can push themselves. "When you talk about graphics you can see immediately that the hardware of the PlayStation 3 offers a much higher capacity and is much more powerful," he told us, comparing PS3 with Xbox 360. "With regards to designing the game everyone knew that the highest limit of what we could achieve

graphically couldn't be much higher. That made it difficult to set our target of where we should be reasonably happy or satisfied with what we had produced. Is our aim high enough or should we be going even higher?"

But a fear of coming up short or not being able to fulfil expectations wasn't the reason many shunned the PS3 at first. That had more to do with the configuration of the hardware.

BioWare's Ray Muzyka insisted that the only way to approach the PS3 was to embrace its differences and then it would open up to you. "Well, you know every platform has its pros and cons and they're all challenging in different ways," he explained. "The interesting thing about approaching a new platform like PlayStation is that it's very powerful and it's just different from anything else. You have to embrace that and make sure

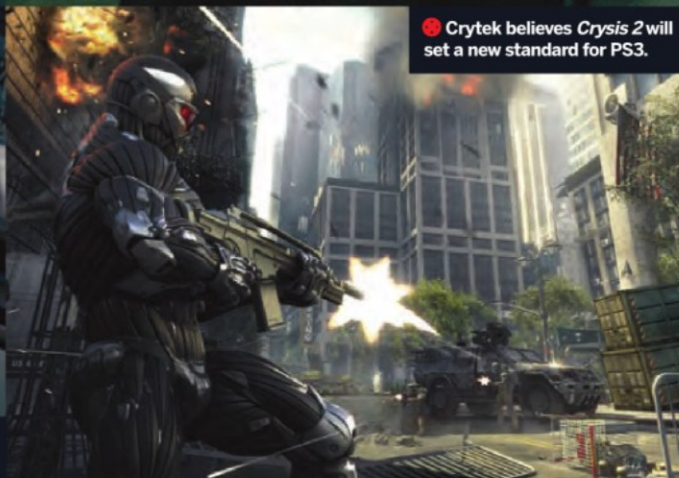




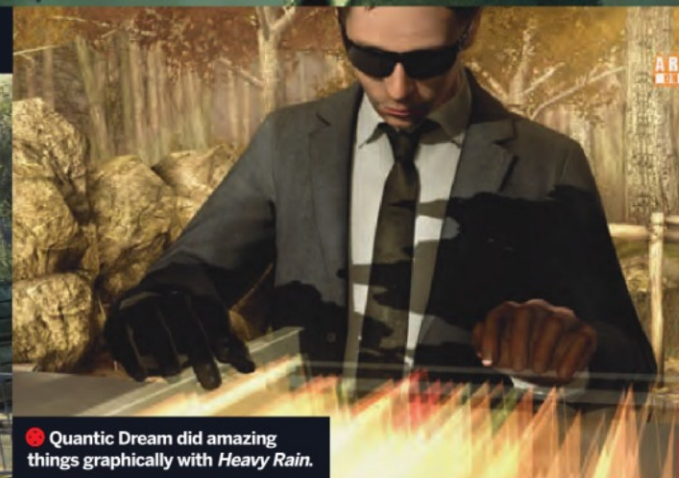
● Splash Damage is making its first PS3 game with *Brink*.



● *Killzone 2* remains a high benchmark for the FPS genre.



● Crytek believes *Crysis 2* will set a new standard for PS3.



● Quantic Dream did amazing things graphically with *Heavy Rain*.

that you're fully aware of the technology differences and make use of all the strengths of the platform."

For Crytek, currently making *Crysis 2* for PC, PS3 and Xbox 360, that meant a completely new engine and in places a new way of thinking. "Since we started developing CryEngine 3 we always knew it was going to be a cross-platform engine and so immediately started thinking about how to minimise the dedicated work for PS3 while still being able to run our codebase at full PS3 utilisation," said Crytek's lead PS3 programmer Michael Glück. "Therefore we developed a system in-house making the very different build and deployment process for PS3 as 'PC like' as possible to give all developers the feeling that it is not

as complicated a platform to develop on as most people thought."

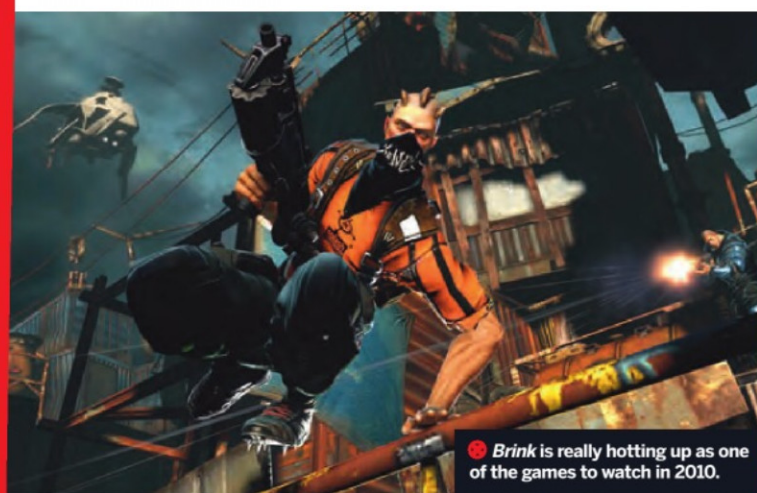
So, like a lion tamer, Crytek has managed to contain the PS3 to be approachable and predictable for its development team. While there had been rumours that the original *Crysis* was going to come to PS3, Glück insisted that

Independent game developers are beginning to reap the benefits of PS3

the old engine simply couldn't have done the game justice on the vastly different PS3. "The re-factoring, along with some very important technical changes like Deferred Rendering and a new shader system were definitely necessary to get it working at the quality level we always want to achieve," he explained. ➤



● Lead development on PS3 meant *FFXIII* was very good looking.



Brink is really hotting up as one of the games to watch in 2010.



Uncharted 2 went for scope as well as detail and really wowed the industry.

Hey, Good Looking

The games that have broken the back of the PS3 challenge



MOTORSTORM (MARCH 2007)

A launch title for the PS3 in Europe, it may not have been the most original of games, but its unfussy use of the PS3's power hinted at great things to come from the console and from this burgeoning franchise. It turns out we were right on both counts as *MotorStorm* continues to impress.



LITTLEBIGPLANET (NOVEMBER 2008)

A wonderful-looking game, but *LittleBigPlanet*'s real breakthrough was in its community and creation features, which showed how much raw processing power the PlayStation 3 really had. Managing that level of customisation and sharing took a very special console.



KILLZONE 2 (FEBRUARY 2009)

This was the game that many held up as the pinnacle of what next-generation consoles could achieve until very recently. A stunning-looking game that also broke significant ground in the area of enemy AI, which isn't appreciated enough in our opinion. Still a great experience to be had.



UNCHARTED 2 (OCTOBER 2009)

A new benchmark for the console as it mixed stunning fidelity with beautifully created vistas, a wide palette of colours and top-class animation to create one of the most well-rounded visual treats ever released on a home console. Truly a landmark game for the generation.



HEAVY RAIN (FEBRUARY 2010)

With its unique capturing process and the benefits of limiting you as a player to a relatively defined path in terms of the game world, Quantic Dream was able to squeeze some amazing visuals out of the PlayStation 3. We're not sure we'll ever see anything better on the platform.

➤ So power alone clearly isn't all that much good if you can't utilise it, but bending the PlayStation 3 to your will isn't the only way to get the best out of it according to *Brink* developer Splash Damage. Its creative director Richard Ham revealed to us that the PS3 completely changed the way his company approached game development across the board. "To get the most out of the PS3, we're required to split our code into lots of separate jobs that can be spread around among the Synergistic Processing Elements (or SPEs), and this is kind of contrary to the more traditional approach to game coding," he told us. "However, we've decided to adopt this practice as our standard for all our platforms, so in the end, there's no real difference between the three for us."

It's still early days for the life cycle of the hardware and the best could well be coming

But like Crytek, Splash Damage needed to make the PS3 work for it a little, too, and once a hook was found that the development team could latch onto the whole system began to open up. "Because id Tech 4 was Mac compatible, there was some PowerPC code in there that we could utilise," Ham revealed to us, referring to the id Software engine Splash Damage has been using since developing *Enemy Territory: Quake Wars* in 2007.

"And since some of the Mac PPC code optimisations worked well for PS3, it gave us a little bit of a head start."

It's not always that simple, though, particularly if you're using your own engine that wasn't designed with the PS3's technology in mind and there was a lot of sympathy from those we spoke to for developers who have struggled with the platform. "You have to spend lots of effort to get code running on the Synergistic Processing Units (SPUs) properly if you don't want to stick entirely to third-party solutions," said Glück. "A lot of knowledge is required to achieve a top-looking and fast-running cutting-edge game on PS3. A straightforward port from PC is almost possible for Xbox 360, but can't be done on PlayStation 3."

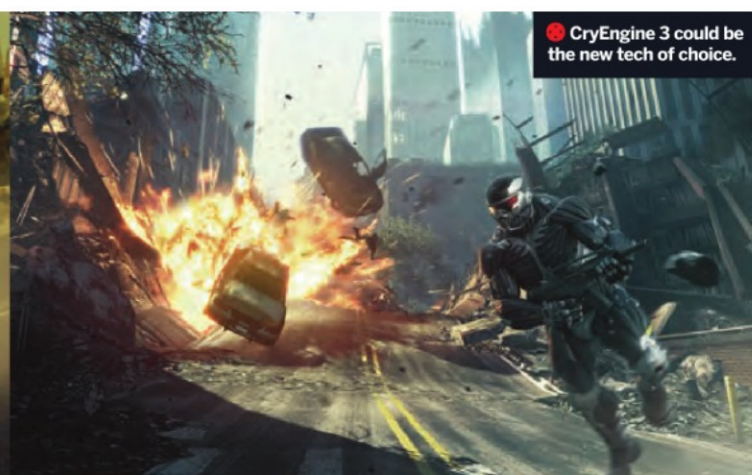
Ham also feels the pain, but has come to believe that it's essential as the PS3 is leading the way to the future of game development. "There's been a learning curve, but

we feel it's worth it in the end," he said. "Multi-core development is the future. It's not impossible to imagine PCs with 24 cores in them within the next few years, so we figure, why not get going with it now?"

Price was also an issue in the past, with the prohibitive cost of consoles scaring developers away from expending effort on a console with a limited user base. "I personally don't think there's much difference between developing a game



● Using PS3 as lead platform dodges issues with ports from Xbox.



● CryEngine 3 could be the new tech of choice.

Leading Lights

The games using PS3 as lead platform

VANQUISH

This exciting new game from Platinum is being made by the creator of *Resident Evil*, Shinji Mikami. After *Bayonetta* was widely criticised for its PS3 outing, which was felt by many to be inferior to the 360 version, it's no surprise Platinum would choose to change tact.



CASTLEVANIA: LORDS OF SHADOW

Perhaps influenced by the supervisory role taken by Kojima, Konami's latest effort to make a 3D *Castlevania* game is leading on PS3. It also seems to be taking its lead from some famous PlayStation titles of the past, too.



MEDAL OF HONOR

EA's return to this classic franchise is one of the most-anticipated games of 2010, and with good reason. EALA is promising that with PS3 as its lead platform it is pushing the hardware as much as it can. That could mean very good things come the winter.



BURNOUT PARADISE

More PS3 love from EA, who's supported the PS3 from the start. *Burnout* really made its name on the PlayStation and this expansive attempt at a more community-driven experience really only had one home. It was released to download in full on PSN in 2008.



FINAL FANTASY XIII

Originally intended as a PS3 exclusive before Microsoft swept in with promises of Western supremacy, *Final Fantasy XIII* is a PS3 game all the way with a much more polished final product on the Sony system. Its spin-off *Versus* is a PS3 exclusive, however.

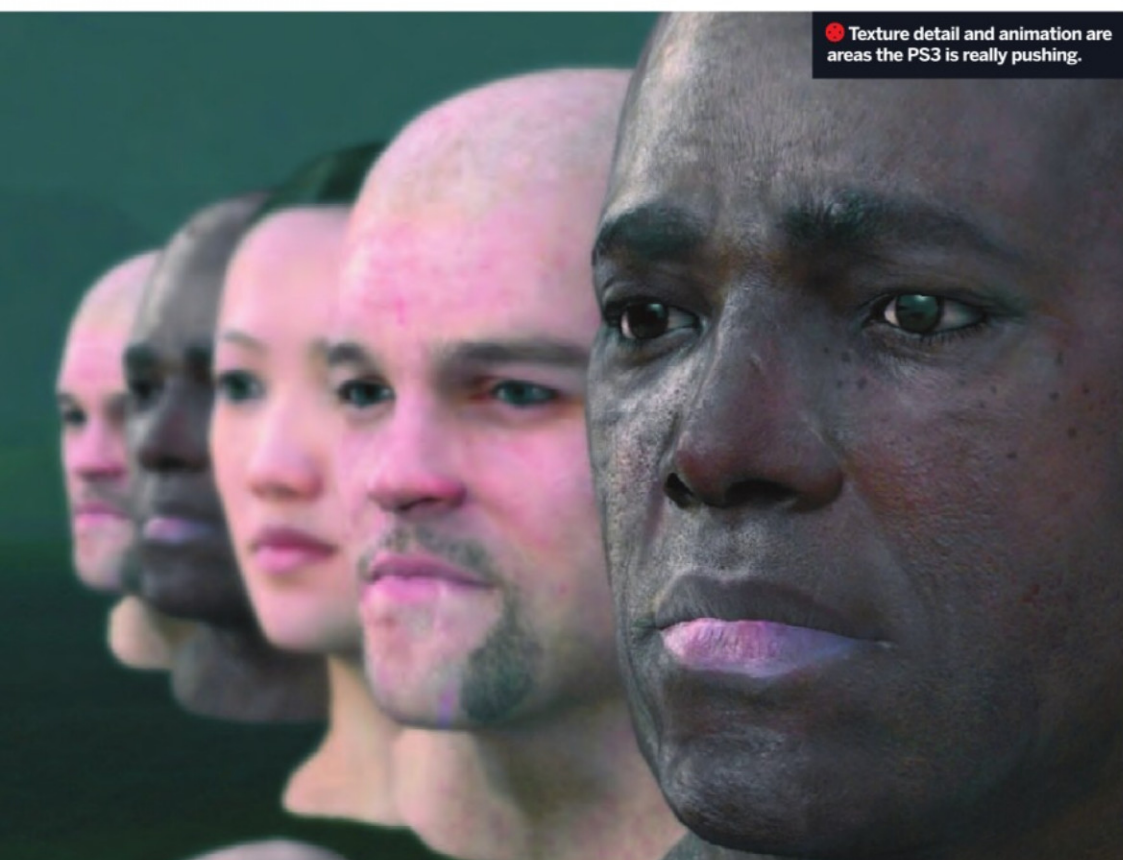


on PS3 or Xbox 360 any more, but I think it used to be quite difficult partly because the machine was so expensive," Square Enix producer Yosuke Saito told us. "But it's not expensive any more so it's not an issue." Ray Muzyka was equally dismissive of the price concerns that once dogged the PS3. "I think it's a huge opportunity with the pricing changes, now the platform is definitely on the upswing and there are some great games coming," he enthused. "We're planning to work more on it. We haven't announced any future projects, but I'd love to see more BioWare games launch on PS3."

The best news for PS3 owners is that while developers are finally getting to grips with the console and producing games like *Uncharted 2*, *Heavy Rain*, *FFXIII*, *Brink* and *Crysis 2*, this is still early days for the life cycle of the hardware and the best could well be

coming. "It's amazing what developers have done so far, but we haven't seen all that the PS3 is capable of," said Richard Ham. "By comparison, just look at the last PlayStation generation. *Shadow Of The Colossus* came out near the end, and no one could have predicted such a thing of beauty in the early days of the PS2 life cycle. The same thing is true for PS3. *Killzone 2* and *Uncharted 2* are incredible milestones, but there's still more to squeeze out of the big black box!"

And the so-called PS3 haters at Valve could well be gearing up for a push on the platform with the recent discovery that a number of key Naughty Dog staff have joined the *Half-Life* developer in recent years. Could this small band of rebels be the springboard of expertise Valve has needed to make a proper stab at PS3 development? We'll be keeping our fingers crossed that they are.



● Texture detail and animation are areas the PS3 is really pushing.



FROM THE MAKERS OF GRAND THEFT AUTO

RED DEAD REDEMPTION™



OUTLAWS TO THE END

21 MAY

ROCKSTARGAMES.COM/REDDEADREDEMPTION



PS3
PlayStation 3



XBOX 360. XBOX LIVE.



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RE:PLAY



You're always telling us we've scored your favourite game too low. Now, one of you has pointed out that games tend to score better than films. Coincidence?



This month's letters answered by:
Gavin Mackenzie,
Square Peg

I think the problem with **Play** is that there aren't enough scores in it, so I'm going to address the problem by scoring this month's letter writers. James Feeney – 81%, Chris – 75%, Gerraint – 79%, Jamie Herrick – 76%, AJ Robinson – 43%. Overall it's been a pretty solid month, but we'd like to have seen more innovation and fewer sequels. Perhaps when letter writers have got to grips with next-gen letter writing technology we'll start seeing some 90%-plus letters. I give this intro column 8%.

Is meta better?

Something I've noticed in recent years is the number of games that are getting plus 80% scores. When looking on these metadata sites to compare average scores for games and movies, high-scoring games heavily outnumber high-scoring films. Why is this? Is it more generous game reviewers? Is it film studios making the same poop every year? Or is it consumers who demand throwaway movie experiences for an hour and a half and £6 a time, but expect more from their £40 games?

James Feeney, Sheffield

We reckon it's a bit of all of the above. Are games, on average, better than movies?

Lair has two 90/100 reviews on Metacritic so yes, some game reviewers are too generous.

Perhaps. After all, if you're paying £40 you want a quality product. Whereas for £6 at the cinema, you're paying for a fun night out and it's not so important that the film is 'good'. Add to that the fact that the movie industry is struggling against a growing games industry, and the fact it's easier for game developers to come up with something new each year than it is for movie studios, and you have part of your explanation. But not all.

Are game reviewers more generous? Perhaps. Compare the sources of movie reviews on Metacritic to the sources of game reviews and most of the movie reviews are from newspapers,

★ STAR letter



which have reputations to uphold. By contrast, most game reviews come from independent game sites which can be too generous. Maybe Metacritic should be more selective with its sources, but is it their fault that all those papers give games a fraction of the coverage they give movies, despite the games industry being bigger these days? No, it's not.

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Finally fantastic

I recently read your first review of *Final Fantasy XIII* and I was disappointed. I immediately thought to myself my fears were correct that the game had taken so long to be released that it was an anticlimax.

Well, it did not deter me and I went out and bought the game on launch date, went home and placed it in the PlayStation 3. After playing around 15 hours of the game, getting used to and enjoying the new battle system, your review started to niggle at the back of my mind. So far I'd been running down linear corridors and it felt very claustrophobic. At this point my email had started out as a criticism of this style of play. That was up until I hit the 20 to 25-hour playing time, when everything opened out. An hour into running around Grand Pulse it dawned on me that the narrow, linear corridors/paths had been a stroke of genius by the guys and girls of Square Enix.

Of course, the first part had to be very linear, it was part of the story and all the characters were running for their lives. They had no common goal yet as such, except maybe Snow and Lightning, and the claustrophobic linear paths helped instill the feeling of loneliness, panic and impending doom.

I was glad that you reviewed the game a second time and gave it a higher score although maybe I'd have given it 90%, but I do understand the first review.

Gerraint, via email

What an unusually thoughtful and reasoned response to a review. Not everyone appreciates that two different reviews by two different writers with two different scores can be just as valid as each other. Just to be clear, though, the second review wasn't intended to correct or amend the first one. We stand by both of our reviews and should also add that the lower score for the first does, in part, reflect the fact that it was played in Japanese. Our reviewer understands Japanese, but we assume that our average reader does not, so our recommendation of the English version is therefore higher.

Finally, while we do take your point about linearity and claustrophobia... 25 hours. It's like that for 25 hours. Not everyone is willing to forgive 25 hours of boredom and frustration because it's part of the story, so *Final Fantasy XIII* is not for everyone. And were we to give it 90% or more, we'd pretty much be saying it was.

● PlayStation Move isn't very gimmicky. Oh well...



Un-Moved

With Project Natal coming along to 'revolutionise' the Xbox 360 and the Wii undoubtedly planning another remote gimmick (Wii balance board for the whole body or something), I find myself a little bit disappointed that Sony's only new gadget is a ball on the end of the controller that helps the Sixaxis do what it's supposed to do anyway. Is Sony falling behind on the gimmick front, or are they secretly saving up for something spectacular for this year's E3? I'm really looking forward to E3 anyway because of the upcoming *Portal 2*, *Half-Life 2: Episode 3* and information on the new *Prince Of Persia*. But I can't shake the feeling that Sony's going to be looked down on by pretty much every major game company out there unless they pull out something special for their console. Do you know if they're planning anything special that I've overlooked, or are they genuinely falling behind for once?

Chris, Eastbourne

Is there really any shame in falling behind on the gimmick front? Gimmicks are not



● *Final Fantasy XIII*: Eventually gets really good.



Write in and win! Every full-length letter we print receives a free game, courtesy of SouthPeak Games. For each letter we got this month, the sender wins a copy of 3D Dot Game Heroes, which is available now for the PS3 (£39.99).

STUPID letter



A game AJ doesn't own. Bet you're glad you looked.

Thick as thieves

I still have not played *Uncharted 2*. Yes, it is true, I have not played *Uncharted 2*. 'Why?' I hear you cry. Is it because I cannot afford it? No. Do I think the game is overrated? No. Am I insane? No. It is because I will play it when I am good and ready, not when I 'should'. I am sure when I do play it I will love it, I loved Drake's first adventure (which I purchased a full year after its release date) and I am sure *Uncharted 2* fully deserves the 99% awarded to it by reader Jake Stirling in issue 189. There are exceptions, a *Grand Theft Auto* game for example will have me queuing up to buy. Also *Heavy Rain* and *Fallout 3* warranted immediate purchases as they had ambition in epic quantities and *UFC* was a truly unique fight game. I guess what I am trying to say is *Uncharted 2* is an action-adventure game, and it is proud of that and so it should be and when I want to play an action-adventure game it is the first game I am going to buy. I best get going before I start to ramble guys. Oh, and did I mention I only bought *Modern Warfare 2* last week?

AJ Robinson, via email

We're not saying you're stupid for waiting to play *Uncharted 2*. That's fine by us. The longer you wait, the better value deal you'll get. That's perfectly reasonable. It's the fact that you've written to us just to say that you're looking forward to playing *Uncharted 2*, but not so much that you've got around to buying it yet that seems a tad stupid. It's a bit like writing in especially to point out that you're totally indifferent about something. But then you have just got yourself a free game out of it, so perhaps it's not that stupid after all. Oh, the eternal paradox of the Stupid Letter...

a good thing. Gimmicks grab attention then fail to deliver. The fact that *Move* is simply the fusion and refinement of two existing technologies is encouraging to us – it suggests it's going to work and

F.A.Q.

Throughout my collection of about 40 PS2 games, not one of them had online. **James Ward, via email**
How times have changed, eh?

So, is there any release date for *WAG*? I want to pre-order my copy! **Ryan, Dublin**
WAG, the world's first 256-player tactical wife-and-girlfriend action experience, is currently just at the concept stage. However, we have forwarded your feedback to Sony.

Why don't Sony sell a peripheral which lets your PS3 detect 3G networks? **Andrew Meehan, Portlaoise**
That's not a bad idea actually. C'mon Sony, why not?

I can't help but notice you keep saying that *MW2* has a perfect online system. This irks me so much. **Alex Thornton, Skelmersdale**
Why? Because you're a bad loser?

GOW III, 88%, shame on you. It's worth at least 90%. **Colin Johnston, via email**
Looks like there's an irreparable gulf between our opinions.

THIS MONTH, YOU'VE BEEN TALKING ABOUT...



- The death of single-player **46%**
- MW2 DLC price **30%**
- Move **9%**
- Controversial scores **15%**

PLAY
GOPLAY
the forum...



The official Play and GoPlay magazine forum
The home of the UK's longest running and best PlayStation magazine

FAQ Search Memberlist Usergroups
Profile You have no new messages Log out [Tim]

Choice topics from the Play forum.
Join the discussion at www.play-mag.co.uk

SUBJECT: PLAY MAGAZINE DISCUSSION

Topic: Wrong review score...

You're not really understanding the point of reviews... they're to guide you into playing/not playing a game, showing you the negatives/positives of the game. Largely it's up for you to decide
Equinox1.0

SUBJECT: HEADLINES

Topic: Final Fantasy XIII

The letter quotes are always meaningless.
supermarioex

SUBJECT: PLAY RETRO

Topic: General Gaming

How many men does it take to open a beer? None it should be open when she gives it to you. Don't get me wrong I'm not very sexist at all
skrudge7

should be relatively easy to develop for. That said, as proper, dedicated gamers we don't think the *Move*, or any of these motion control products are really aimed at us. It's fun for an hour or so of mini-game silliness, but for a proper, slovenly, at-one-with-the-sofa gaming session, we'll stick with our regular pad and regular games.

Package deal

Recently it's been announced that the new *Modern Warfare 2* maps have been priced at just over £10. This I feel is a bit of a rip-off, as we're only getting three new maps, with two of the five being recycled old ones.

It annoys me that huge companies such as Activision can charge such a price, but know full well that people will still pay for it, just because it's such a popular game.

A much more reasonable price would be about £5-£6, which I think people would be much more happy to pay, but this I'm afraid is wishful thinking, as they try to make as much money as they can, rather than actually listening to their customers.

It's up to us to not download these overpriced DLC pieces, and to show the industry that we're

not puppets on their string. I know I won't be downloading it... will you?

Jamie Herrick, Lincoln

Um... to be honest, we will. Even if we don't get the *Stimulus Package* for free, we'll still pay for it because we love *Modern Warfare 2* and know we'll play the new maps loads and, y'know, it's part of our jobs to do stuff like that. Having said all that, you're right that it is a bit on the expensive side when two of the maps are just old ones that aren't all that good anyway, and we respect your decision not to buy it. It is, sadly, the only way to really get a publisher to listen. Vote with your wallet by keeping it in your pocket.

The BURNING issues

The stuff we want to hear about!



- 1 When some DLC you really want is released at a very high price, can you resist buying it?
- 2 Would you like to see multiplayer modes in your favourite, currently single-player-only game?
- 3 Can you actually see yourself using *Move* on a regular basis?



Stimulus Package:
Cheerful but not cheap.

► the big
story ◀◀

STAR WARS

THE FORCE UNLEASHED II

Play was invited to an exclusive first look at The Force Unleashed II at LucasArts HQ, San Francisco. But is the Force strong in this one, or is it just a scruffy-looking nerf herder?



● Starkiller was always strong in the Force, but it's been ramped up even more this time.

The release of the original *Star Wars: The Force Unleashed* came all the way back in September of 2008 and was greeted with the kind of flustered, sweaty fervour that can only ever welcome a *Star Wars* game (or anything to do with *Star Wars*). So it was with great disappointment that we dragged ourselves away from the original *Force Unleashed* (65% **Play** 171), thoroughly let down and dejected by the promise of what should have been. It's not that the game was woeful – it just lacked in one key department: the game itself. The story was fantastic, and a perfect fit for the *Star Wars* universe. It told the story of Darth Vader's secret apprentice, Starkiller, as he went around the universe eliminating the remaining Jedi, before realising the error of his ways, creating the Rebel Alliance and sacrificing his own life for the greater good – a classic tale of redemption, handled with characters that just *fit* in George Lucas's world of hokey old religions and blasters at your side.

Presentation-wise, the original game also shone, with some fine-looking environments, epic cut-scenes and – unsurprisingly – a fantastic, rousing, orchestral score backing it all up. Aside from these elements was the much-hyped technology factor, using a combination of the Euphoria physics engine (seen in *GTA IV*) and Digital Molecular Matter, as well as the more standard Havok physics, to produce some hilarious and fantastic destructive moments. The first time you see a Stormtrooper clinging to anything in the immediate area to save him from being Force Pushed from the top of a lofty walkway is

something that lives with you for a long time – and it raises questions as to why more games haven't yet employed these technologies.

But it fell down in the most important area: for all of its bluster, the fact that it was *Star Wars* and the fact you could throw Wookiees from treetops with your mind, it had far less of an impact than it should have, and it's all because the game just wasn't that much fun to play. Aside from a few glitches that hampered enjoyment there were some poor design decisions all around, from the slidey floors in the middle of a platforming section, through unfair boss battles, to 'that bit' – yes, the section where you are tasked with

"LUCASARTS HAS DECIDED TO CARRY ON WITH THE SAME LEAD CHARACTER"

bringing down a Star Destroyer with your bare hands. It should have been the best bit in the game – epic, incredible and showing how truly powerful Starkiller was. Instead it was fiddly, irritating and sometimes broken (the wrong prompts on screen? *Really?*). We weren't angry, nor did we swear off *Star Wars* forever, but we were let down, and it made us cautious about the announcement of the sequel.

The Force Unleashed II may be being approached in a more cautious fashion by those burned by the original, but that doesn't mean we aren't incredibly excited by the prospect of taking Starkiller out for another run in the galaxy-park. Did we say Starkiller? Why yes, we did. You see, canonically the all-powerful apprentice did die at the end of *TFU*, messed up royally by the rather miffed Emperor Palpatine – though at the same time

he sacrificed himself for the good of the Rebel Alliance. While that was a fine, noble ending to the game, LucasArts has decided to carry on with the same lead character, this time in the shape of a clone created by Darth Vader. Using the same cloning facility on Kamino we saw during the prequel trilogy, Vader creates a new version of Starkiller and induces accelerated growth in the apprentice MkII to bring him up to full spec in a short amount of time (about three to six months, apparently).

The beginning of the game sees Starkiller being awakened and informed by Vader that he is indeed a clone and that the accelerated process used to create him has numerous drawbacks – including sending its creations insane and suicidal. An understandably perturbed, half-amnesiac, confused apprentice is forced to come to terms with and deal

with these apparent facts. He remembers things from his past life, but his memories are faded, fractured and appear like dreams – or simply the memories of another person. Starkiller knows parts of what happened, but he is confused by his feelings and doesn't know how to cope – he knows he loves Juno Eclipse, the supporting character and love interest from the first game, and this emotion is what drives a lot of his story through the second game. Vader tells Starkiller he was revived to track down the remaining Jedi, with his first target being one General Rahm Kota, currently being held in captivity on the planet of Cato Neimoidia. This lights a spark in Starkiller, inspiring him to escape the clutches of Vader and head off on his way to meet up with his former mentor – his only hope of once again finding Juno and being reunited ➤



• We have yet to see any Ewoks or Gungans.

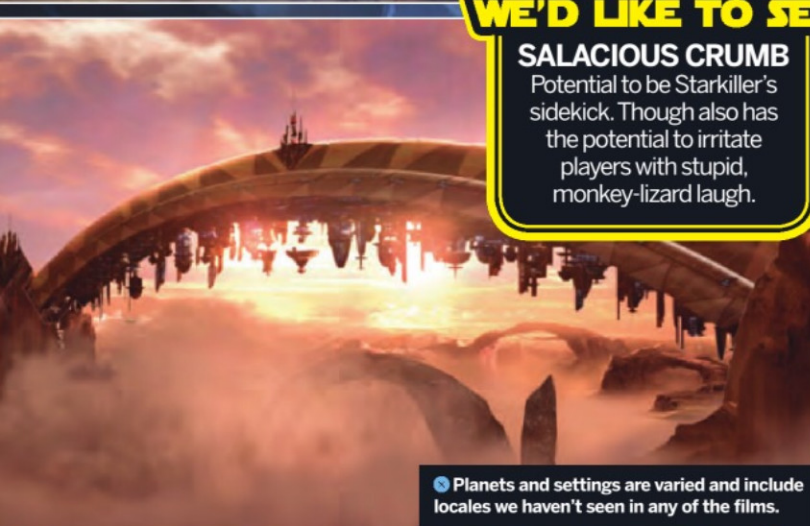


• We have to assume that the incredible feelings of power from the first game make a return.

CHARACTERS WE'D LIKE TO SEE

SALACIOUS CRUMB

Potential to be Starkiller's sidekick. Though also has the potential to irritate players with stupid, monkey-lizard laugh.



• Planets and settings are varied and include locales we haven't seen in any of the films.



• The story is said to be darker than before – *TFU's Empire Strikes Back*, in a way.

with the Rebel Alliance he had a hand in creating. We were told more than that, but to ruin the carefully crafted story of Haden Blackman and co would be doing a massive disservice to the game, especially after the undeniable quality of the writing behind the first. Safe to say, it doesn't go as smoothly as Starkiller would hope and a lot of planet-hopping, chasing, escaping and battling comes into play throughout the course of the game. Will Kota believe Vader's story that Starkiller is a clone? Will Starkiller manage to find Juno? Will the voice acting for Vader be better this time around? Time will tell.

We were among the lucky few from outside LucasArts to witness the first in-game showcase of *The Force Unleashed II*, and while things were still very early on in development it was more than enough to get our excitement up and our nerd juices flowing. Even the failings of the last game can't tarnish the ingrained reaction of a *Star Wars* geek, and as we were shown a few

on the combo system of the original, which didn't feel particularly broad and quickly became a case of hammering the same moves out across the whole of the game.

As we all know far too well, though, a *Star Wars* game is nothing without Force powers. *The Force Unleashed II* picks up where the last game left off with regards to the ways in which Starkiller can dispatch his enemies using his mind. In fact, according to what we were told in the presentation, he is a little bit more powerful than he was at the end of the first title – so the only way from there is up, really. We were privy to a couple of new powers the apprentice has up his sleeve/in his brain, with the classic Jedi mind trick being one of them. This area of effect power causes enemies in a certain region to begin fighting on the side of Starkiller, turning against their comrades and generally proving to the galaxy just how weak-minded and foolish they truly are. It's not an unexpected addition to

the series and is one we're sure will raise more laughs than the existing powers already do.

The second major

"GONE IS THE BORING SINGLE LIGHTSABER, REPLACED BY THE DUAL-WIELDING OPTION"

new elements of the game it became clear that this is one to keep an eye on.

Probably the first thing to pop out at the player – whether they took on the first game or not – is Starkiller's loadout. Gone is the boring, banal single Lightsaber, replaced instead by the dual-wielding option so popular with show-offs and those prone to losing limbs. This isn't merely a cosmetic effect, however, and the doubling up on the Jedi's most famous weapon is incorporated into a new, more flowing melee combat system for players to get to grips with. Combination attacks have been completely revamped to suit the style of double Saber attacks, and the scope for combos has been increased to the point that – well, we were shown one poor Stormtrooper being relentlessly beaten on for a good 15 or so seconds solid before he was cast off into the stratosphere. It looks to be a real improvement

new power we were shown was a much bigger one that looks set to change how a fair portion of the game plays out. Force Fury affects every power Starkiller has, turning him into a wrecking ball of Force Fury, and really helping the game live up to its title. Lightning attacks under Force Fury will hit enemies on the whole screen, electrifying them to a crisp; new, faster and more powerful combos are unlocked in Fury mode and allow you to inflict even more Sabery pain on the legions of grunts in your way; and, as for Force Push, rather than bowling enemies over in a simple (though satisfying) manner, when under the influence of Fury the attack will knock enemies into orbit. Literally into orbit. The simple addition of Force Fury opens up the world, once again, to some great muck about opportunity. The central idea of *The Force Unleashed* was that you were a ridiculously powered Jedi, and it does indeed look like this

STACKED IN ACTORS

Good writing is nothing without good actors, apparently



THE FORCE UNLEASHED saw ILM and LucasArts collaborate in a way they hadn't done before, using motion capture and full-scene acting to create the cut-scenes. As a result, while we may not have adored the first game, it's hard to deny the quality of these scenes. So it's unsurprising that the principal cast of the first game are returning, such as Sam Witwer, who played Starkiller, and Nathalie Cox, who played Juno Eclipse. But aside from storyline necessity, why has Witwer been re-hired? As Haden Blackman told us: "One of the reasons I brought back Starkiller is because I love working with Sam, he's super cool and he's a huge *Star Wars* fan." So there you have it.

STAR WARS: THE FORCE UNLEASHED II



CHARACTERS WE'D LIKE TO SEE

JAR JAR BINKS

It's a travesty that the greatest character in the history of the *Star Wars* saga isn't in every game ever. This should be remedied for *TFU II*.

❖ Enemy types are more limited than before visually, but more interesting in their varying abilities.

idea might be realised with the sequel. At the very least, it'll raise some smiles.

Another element the team were keen to talk about was the huge boss battles – now we weren't entirely sure if this meant 'huge' in the sense that the enemy being faced was massive in stature, or 'huge' in the sense that they would be epic. Our questions were answered with the reveal of the Orloc: you've seen this badboy if you watched *TFU II*'s reveal trailer. He stands about 20 times taller than a Rancor and looks even more pissed off. This is an element LucasArts is keen to explore in the new game through pitting Starkiller against these giant, screen-filling bosses that will take more than a bit of button hammering to defeat. It's an increasingly prevalent theme in gaming these days and it would be easy to complain, but that would be pointless. Massive enemies are brilliant, and if you throw in Lightsabers and Force powers then, well, we're excited. Hopefully the game retains one-on-one Saber duels, but huge bosses are more than welcome.

Away from combat and generally beating up hapless enemies with the power of your brain, LucasArts is keen to expand the overall

experience in *TFU II*. Rather than haughty promises and keenly worded press releases, though, it decided to instead show us what it was talking about – admittedly only in one example, but it's early days. Starkiller was located at the foot of a building and needed to be at the top. In front of him were two lifts, neither of which he could actually get inside

"STAR WARS IS STILL A NAME CAPABLE OF MAKING BIG MONEY FOR LUCASARTS"

or power. Instead, using his Force Grip power, Starkiller used the lifts as alternating stepping stones to reach his target. Yes, it's a very small example and, yes, it is very simple. But the fact there were little-to-no environmental puzzles of this type in the first game means it's a welcome addition to the game and hopefully it's something that LucasArts will expand on throughout the finished game. We've also been promised a bigger emphasis on exploration to accompany the new puzzle elements, though, we severely doubt it will be anything like 'GTA: *Star Wars*' (note to self: copyright 'GTA: *Star Wars*' idea). Other changes of note popped

up here and there throughout our demo – for one, we've been promised that the first game's famously loose targeting will be tightened and refined so it actually works this time around. Enemy types are another thing feeling the hammer of change smashing them about a bit: the first game had around a hundred different enemy types, but they tended to follow a

similar pattern and failed to be much more than a simple re-skin of standard enemies. This time around things should be different, and while there are less enemy types – around 20 in total – the

differences between each type should be great enough to actually be noticeable. No more will it feel like running through endless corridors of identikit cannon fodder – something that was a big drain on the fun factor of the first game. We were even promised that QTEs, the bane of seemingly every gamer's existence, would be refined so they weren't intrusive or repetitive. It's something we're saying increasingly often (in fact, we're saying that we're saying it increasingly often increasingly often), but this does look like another sequel where the developer is taking criticisms on board to create a much better experience second time around.

Seven million copies of the first game were sold: *Star Wars* is still a name capable of making big money for LucasArts. It would be easy to dismiss *The Force Unleashed II* as being 'just another sequel' or 'just another *Star Wars* game', if you were so inclined. But the passion and enthusiasm shown when we saw the game and talked to its creators really got our hopes up. We were stung before by the first game, but this time around things should be very different – and much better. In fact, we could say LucasArts should try harder, but then we'd have to go with 'try not...' and that's a conceit we're not willing to make.

DON'T BE TOO PROUD OF THIS TECHNOLOGICAL TERROR



Smashing things has been refined

THE FORCE UNLEASHED II will see the return of the successful triumvirate from the first game: the combination of the Euphoria engine, the Digital Molecular Matter system and Havok physics. First time around it was impressive enough, but this time we should look forward to something even better. The entire team from the original has returned and with it comes – as LucasArts describes it – a "muscle memory". This means the team's collective experience is at a level where they can hit the ground running – they're used to the technology and this knowledge has been applied for technological and performance-based improvements. This means when you fling the Stormtroopers about it will look even better than it did last time around.

CHARACTERS WE'D LIKE TO SEE

LANDO CALRISSIAN

He's a less obvious choice than Han Solo and his history is just as rich. Plus, *TFU II* needs scoundrels. Always with the scoundrels.

The entire dev team of *TFU I* returned for the sequel, so hopefully they've learned from the mistakes of the past.

DEVELOPER Q&A

Haden Blackman, executive producer



IN-BETWEEN TAKING a look at *The Force Unleashed II* and staring at the reams of memorabilia around the LucasArts campus, we sat down for a chat with Haden Blackman, executive producer and writer for the game.

Was there much temptation to use a different lead character?

There was. We kicked around a few ideas initially: looking at creating a new Force wielder; we talked about some named characters that we could use in this *Force Unleashed* context. But ultimately we decided that Starkiller was a character we were all very fond of and attached to and we all thought there was more story we could tell with him. Once we figured out how we were going to bring him back it all made sense and fell into place.

How dark can you really go with the story?

Pretty dark. We felt like *The Force Unleashed I* was pretty dark – the first half of it you're hunting down the last of the Jedi – but what we tried to do with *TFU I* was show a character that was still empathetic on some level. That's why we showed Vader taking him as a child – you can understand, in a way, what he had become and there's still some bright light in him. He's able to be friends with Proxy and has a relationship with Juno that is far different from his relationship with Vader. In this story it's a more personal story, in some ways.

He's dealing with a sense of identity and not knowing whether he's going insane or not, and the possible collapse of the Rebel Alliance, and his being torn between what he wants and what Kota wants. I think it's just as dark as *TFU I* in some ways, but it's a lot more personal, too.

How long after the first game is it set?

We're being a little bit vague on it, but it's about – just because we're dealing with this whole accelerated cloning process – six months.

Do you often want to include 'name' characters from the film series?

I think when we first sat down and brainstormed there's always that temptation, but for me it's about what fits into the story and what makes sense from a story standpoint. We'll sit down, we'll brainstorm early on and say "what planets do people want to go to, what characters might they want to interact with" – we got to do a lot of that with the downloadable content stuff we did for *TFU I*, so you're able to go to Tatooine and Hoth, and fight Boba Fett and Obi-Wan and Luke and all these cool recognisable characters. I feel like we got some of that out in DLC, but there's always that strong temptation to do it. We'll brainstorm and then say 'does it fit logically in the story?' There's definitely some stuff we haven't revealed yet about the story and I think that it will be a nice surprise for fans.

When you're writing the game's story are you doing it for an 'uneducated' audience or

for existing fans of the *Star Wars* series?

In *The Force Unleashed I* we really made a conscious effort to make sure the story wasn't so 'inside' that you had to know every detail about the Expanded Universe to get it. Really my desire was that if you hadn't seen anything you could still enjoy the game story, but certainly if you understand the films and Vader you're going to get more out of it. But we're all fans, so we've put in elements that hopefully people really appreciate. With *The Force Unleashed II* again we're trying to create a story that if you've played *The Force Unleashed I* you're going to know a bit more going into it, but hopefully the story still stands on its own and you can enjoy it even if you haven't played [the first game], whether or not you're familiar with all the continuity.

How much freedom do you have with the writing?

On *Force Unleashed I* it was actually surprisingly wide open for us because that's a time period no one had really done anything in yet, and we were kind of the first who were approved to go off and tell a new story in that time frame. We had to get approval from George [Lucas] to basically portray the Force in the way we wanted to portray it and to give Darth Vader a secret apprentice. He had some comments on the way we wanted to use Princess Leia in the first one and he wanted to make sure that we were aware that Bail Organa was one of the founders of the Rebel Alliance, but that was it – those were the only



CHARACTERS WE'D LIKE TO SEE

KYLE KATARN

Star of the *Dark Forces* and *Jedi Knight* series of games, Katarn would be welcome in the world of *TFU II* if only for his brilliant beard.

• Combos looked far more flowing and smoother than before.

• Darth Vader also makes his return, attempting to control Starkiller once more.

CHARACTERS WE'D LIKE TO SEE

ADMIRAL ACKBAR

A favourite of both Play and Haden Blackman, executive producer on *TFU II*. All together now: "It's a trap!"

• Starkiller is a clone this time around – an element of the story LucasArts is keen to point out.

real constraints that we had. Then we went to Lucasfilm licensing whenever we thought there was a conflict or an issue or anything that we wanted to make sure. With *The Force Unleashed II*, because we'd already established this notion of Darth Vader's secret apprentice, really it was just sitting down with licensing and saying 'this is what we want to do' and getting a few pieces of feedback from them. But they haven't constrained us from a story perspective at all.

What do you think of the claims from some developers and publishers that there is no future for single-player gaming?

I disagree. I think there will always be a place for strong, story-driven, character-driven single-player game – look at *Uncharted 2*, or *TFU*. Clearly the success of those games shows there is a market for that. Do I think multiplayer and online play is becoming increasingly important? Absolutely, and we'll probably be at a balance at some point. Now that doesn't mean you can't have strong story in multiplayer games, too. Personally I'm excited about that and the future: what we can do with storytelling in the future in multiplayer games, co-op games and MMOs. Even *Left 4 Dead*, which has a very loose story structure – almost no story, it's just

more of a setting – it's kind of cool because you end up telling stories to each other about your experience that you went through, which I think is awesome. I think story is always going to be important in games. Whether the industry is dominated by linear, story-driven, character-driven narratives? I think that's not going to be the case. I don't think that's the case today, we

"THERE'S ALWAYS GOING TO BE A PLACE FOR STORY-DRIVEN GAMES"

have much more of a balance. In the end there's always going to be a place for [story-driven games] because people enjoy it. *God Of War III*, *Uncharted 2* – every year we still see huge blockbusters that are that type of game.

How has the position of a dedicated writer for videogames changed over the years?

It's changed dramatically. First of all, there is a position for dedicated writers now, which I don't think there was. The funny thing is I was hired into the industry as a writer/researcher and this was 13 years ago, but that was for a very specific type of project – the interactive *Star Wars* Encyclopaedia. [In the past] you'd hire somebody to maybe help out with some

scriptwriting for a couple of weeks or something like that. But I think having somebody on the project from the beginning to the end in charge of the story is going to become increasingly important for all types of games. You look at some of the big MMOs or the big RPGs and they have whole teams of writers – whether they call them designers or writers: their job is

to create narratives. Increasingly we're seeing games that hire writers from the very beginning – look at *Uncharted 2*: one of their two creative directors was in charge of the story and realising that story. I'm

heartened by that and I think it's a really good thing for the industry, to move in that direction and to have people that can understand telling an interactive story and be open to and nimble enough to change the story to fit the design of the game as it changes. We went over a number of revisions on *Force Unleashed* just because we were like 'this [element] is cooler so we want to play that out' or 'here's a gameplay mechanic we didn't know about when we wrote the story and we want to make that part of the game now'. We altered the story almost on a weekly basis up until we hit alpha in order to take advantage of that, and that's really hard to do when you're just using a contract writer who is only on the project for a window.



blur™

"Blur's multiplayer mode is Call of Duty: Modern Carfare." 

"One of the best online experiences of the year." 

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PREVIEW

The games that will shape the future of PlayStation



Is he having a shower?

RELEASE DATE: TBC 2011

Lord Of The Rings:

Experienced developers, 'maturity' and a strong publisher make for an interesting fellowship.

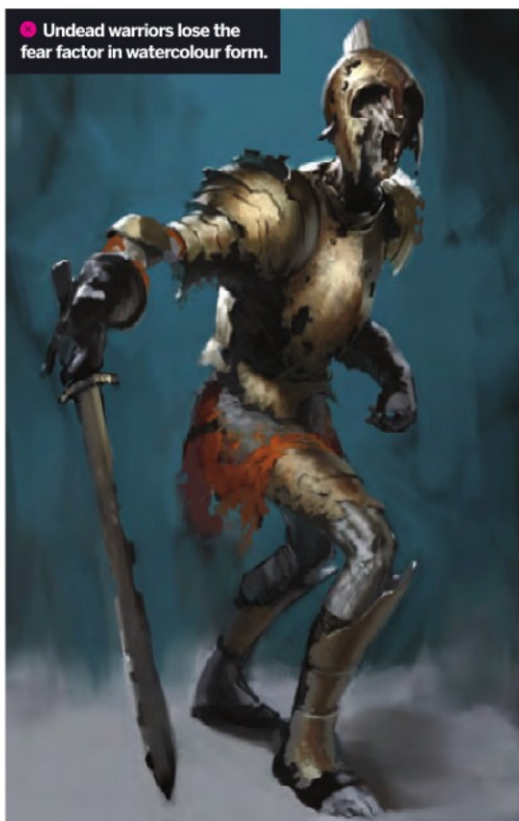
Since Peter Jackson's big-screen adaptation of *The Lord Of The Rings* we have been inundated with games based on JRR Tolkien's world. Some were all right, some were bad, some had silly, long titles (the PC's *The Lord Of The Rings: The Battle For Middle-Earth II: The Rise Of The Witch-King* taking the cake, the plate and the whole dining suite for that one) and generally speaking, none got us that thrilled about the subject matter. Snowblind Studios aims to change that with *War In The North*, the first 'mature' *LOTR* game ever made and from a studio with a pedigree in

action-RPGs stretching back to the likes of *Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance* (77%, **Play** 85) and *Champions Of Norrath* (86%, **Play** 114). Snowblind may have been away from the genre for a few years, but that doesn't stop us being cautiously optimistic about this one, and set in Middle-earth it's not exactly somewhere it can mess up the back story, is it?

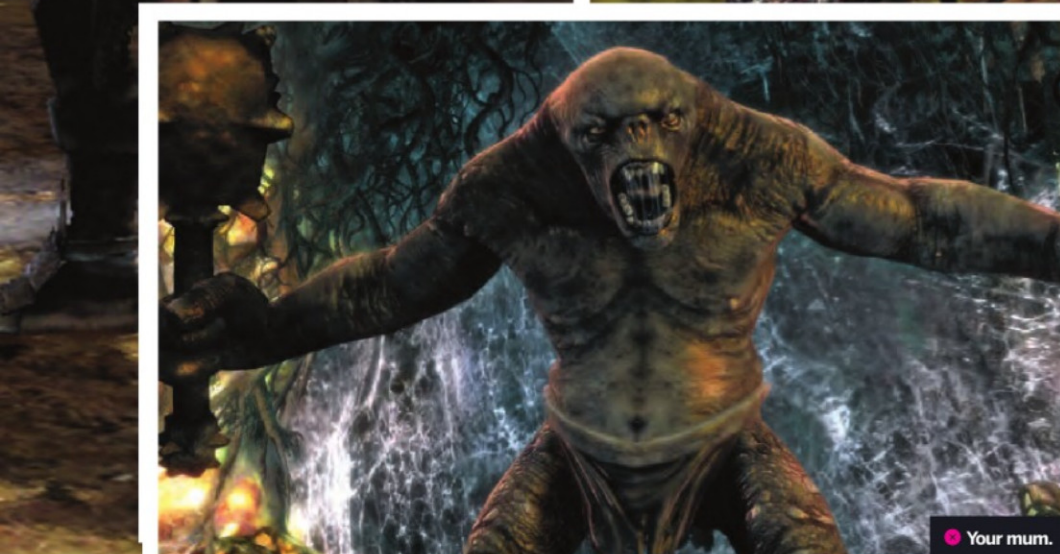
Ryan Geithman, studio head and founder of Snowblind, thinks his team can make something that stands out, "We want to make sure we do it right and the characters, events, and locations make sense." He went on, "However, we will be exploring

quite a bit of new content that wasn't seen in the movies. Because of this, and the fact that you are not playing characters from the movie, this game will certainly have a much different 'feel' than previous *LOTR* games where much of it was a rehashing of what transpired in the movie."

War In The North is a three-player, drop-in/drop-out co-operative game which can be played online or locally. Geithman explained why the team felt this was the way to go, saying, "I would say there are few gaming experiences more fun than playing a co-operative game in the same room, on the couch with your buddy or significant other



Undead warriors lose the fear factor in watercolour form.



War In The North

(split-screen)." He went on, "Instead of co-op being an afterthought we are trying to make it a focus of the game. If you don't play together then you will have a much harder time completing the game. *WITN* is a game that is meant to be played with your friends." But the great friendless out there shouldn't despair – the other characters in your team are replaced by AI bots should you need them to be. And if you do manage to net yourself some friends at any point, they can join in as and when they like. It's certainly a sound formula for some good fun and – regardless of whether you play solo or with mates – there should be a definite fellowship feel about the whole thing. As Geithman pointed out, "I think always having multiple characters adventuring together (whether they

are human or computer controlled) creates a feeling that you are involved in a more interesting adventure." He clarified, "It's surprising what adding a couple of extra players can do to the game. It gets rid of the feeling of

Most LOTR games have been aimed at a mass market, meaning the more adult tone of War In The North may come as a surprise

loneliness that many games have. Especially when the NPCs in your party banter to you throughout the level or engage in your conversations with characters throughout the world."

Most games in Tolkien's universe have been aimed at a mass market, or even the kiddies out there, meaning the more adult tone of *War In The*

North may come as a surprise. As Geithman explained, "This is the first 'M' rated LOTR game, which means that we will actually be able to show brutally realistic melee combat." Whether that means liberal doses of

nudity and harsh language, however, we are unsure. What we are sure is that Snowblind will have to tread a fine line to stop the game from veering into daft territory – something a great deal of so-called 'mature' games have done in the past. But those worrying the game may take a step too far away from the source material – both book and film

SANDBOX A-RPG-'EM-UP

Don't judge a game by its genre

THE ACTION-RPG genre isn't an oversubscribed one, and as such *War In The North's* entry to its ranks doesn't fill us with dread. In fact, this is a genre that includes the likes of *Crisis Core: Final Fantasy VII* (87%, **Play** 167), *Oblivion* (91%, **Play** 152) and *Diablo* (74%, **Play** 34), so any addition to it at least perks our ears up. The fact that the developer is experienced and proven when it comes to the genre, there's three-player co-op and that it's set in the *Lord Of The Rings* world just makes it even better.



PREVIEW



● Combat will likely be a slightly strategic hammering of buttons.

— need not fret, as the developer is aiming to keep things as accurate as possible. Mr Geithman again, “We will be exploring quite a bit of new content that wasn’t seen in the movies. Because of this, and the fact that you are not playing characters from the movie, this game will certainly have a different ‘feel’ than previous *LOTR* games where much of it was a rehashing of what transpired in the movie.”

But does *War In The North* take its inspiration from page, screen or the minds of the developers? “Actually,

in our company got into fantasy art in the first place because of Tolkien and all the great fantasy art that was created around his books. It’s more excitement than anxiousness.”

Snowblind Studios has a good pedigree when it comes to hack, slash and loot action-RPGs and the *LOTR* franchise is as good a background as any to set a game in. The company have been out of the A-RPG business for a while, but we can’t help but look forward to another adventure in Middle Earth — especially one with “brutally realistic

Snowblind Studios has a good pedigree when it comes to hack, slash and loot action-RPGs

[it] owes a bit to both the books and films. Obviously we have a huge visual target set by the movies. Fans can expect to see areas of Middle-earth that they’ve never seen in such a high fidelity before. This is one aspect of the game that the artists are really excited about, creating new areas that weren’t in the films.” And as for the inevitable pressure that comes with tackling such a beloved franchise? It’s tempered with an eagerness, according to Geithman, “There is pressure to ‘get things right’. However, many of the artists

melee combat”. But we should leave the last word to Geithman, “All of the projects we have worked on before have owed tribute to the Tolkien universe in one form or another. Being able to work on *LOTR* is great and something the entire team is excited about. We are pulling out all the stops to make certain that the game is as good as we can make it and also stays true to the universe.”

LOTR: War In The North is being developed by Snowblind Studios. Check out www.warinthenorth.com for more details.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

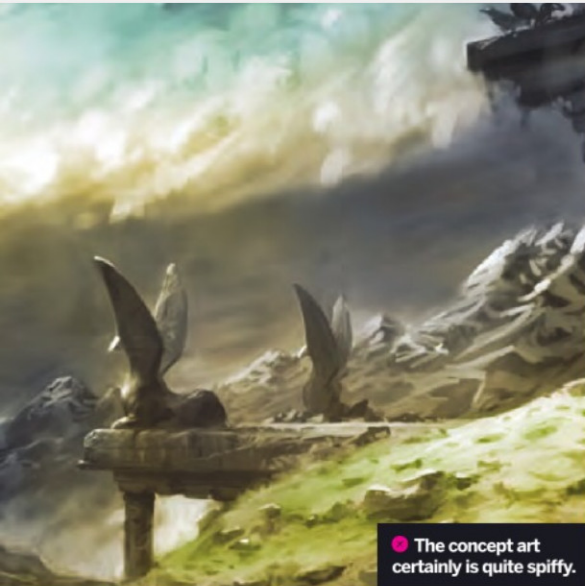
- Hack, slash and loot: three components for super-fun.
- The lore is established and (unsurprisingly) we love it.
- This ‘mature’ claim has us rather intrigued.
- Three-player co-op always makes us happy.

READ ME

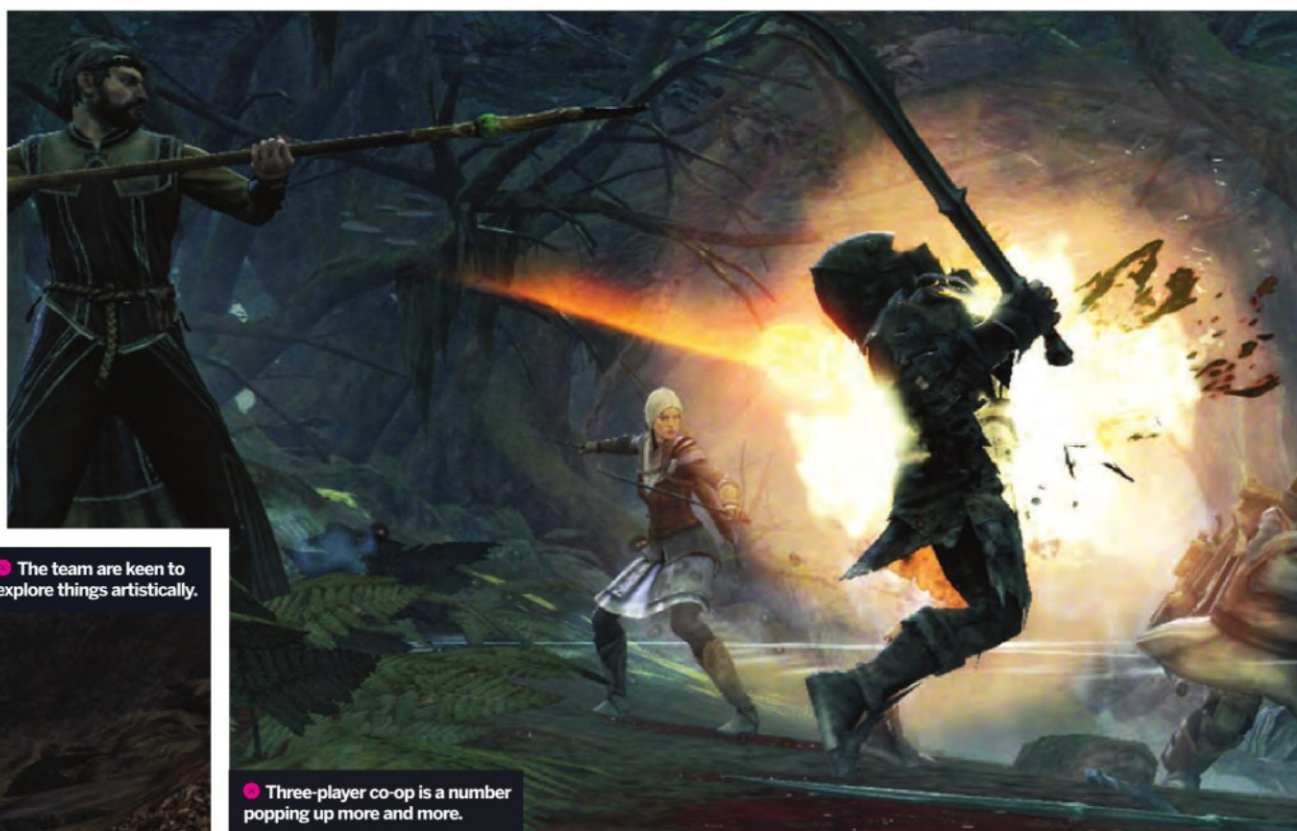
This is approximately the 4,357th *LOTR* game released since the films, although that may well be a slight exaggeration on our part.



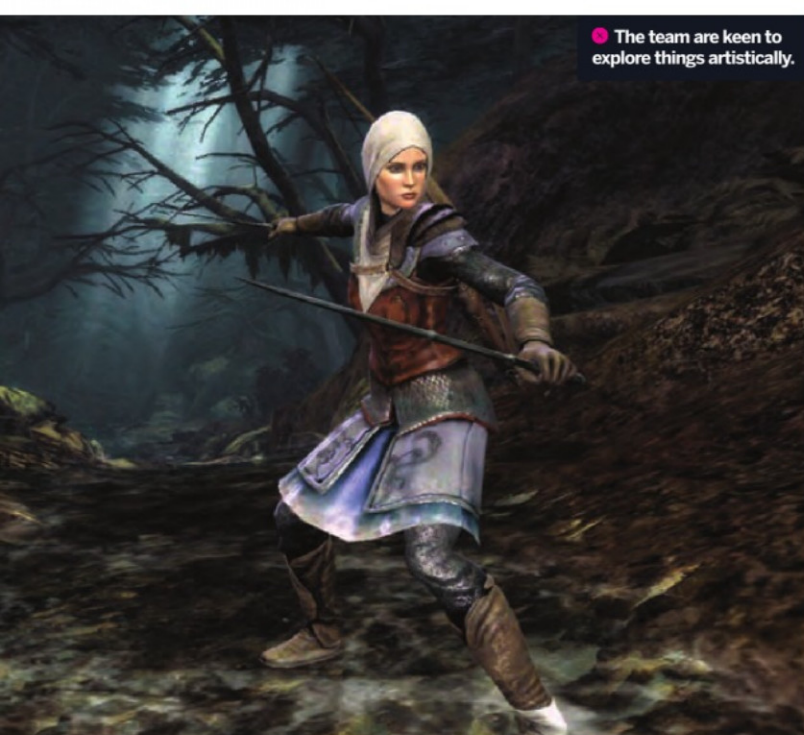
● We can only hope the loot factor is as compulsive as *Borderlands*.



● The concept art certainly is quite spiffy.



● Three-player co-op is a number popping up more and more.



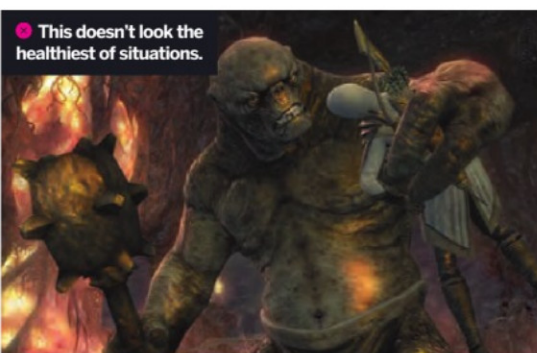
● The team are keen to explore things artistically.



● Dwarves do have some incredible beards.



● This doesn't look the healthiest of situations.



CHOOSE YOUR DESTINY

Let's hazard a guess at character classes, shall we?



DWARVES:

- Stocky powerhouses who favour warhammers and axes.
- Potential to be thrown.
- Enjoy ale.
- Incredi-beards.

ELVES:

- Incredible archers, quick reactions and generally speedy battlers.
- Can only die in battle, not of natural causes.
- Tall.
- No beards (though this is debatable).

THE RACE OF MEN:

- Capable warriors, rogues and general all-rounders.
- Seen as underdogs by Elves; tend to prove otherwise.
- Have lots of wars.
- Decent beard factor.

PREVIEW



Even the most obvious cases could be hiding something from you.



The re-creations of the actors in *LA Noire* is the best we've ever seen.

LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION

There's more to *LA Noire* than talking

FOR THOSE OF you who have read a little about *LA Noire* and are starting to worry that it's nothing but a bunch of talking heads and puzzles, have no fear. While it may not be a *GTA* game by any stretch of the imagination, there will still be plenty of action in each case. That could mean an on-foot pursuit or a car chase or even a shoot-out depending on how desperate your target is to get away from the law. Ultimately, though, you're not a crook or even a dirty cop and doing the right thing in the right way is what *LA Noire* is all about.



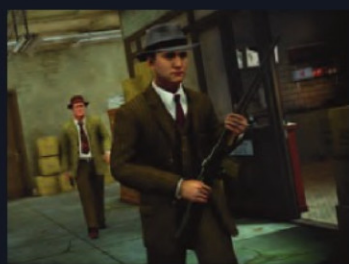
LA Noire isn't all talk. Sometimes you'll have to get your hands dirty.



Our keenly trained detective skills tell us this is a bad situation.



SAUSAGE 17¢ LAMB CHOPS 20¢ SPAGHETTI 20¢
PIZZA 17¢ CHICKEN AND POTATOES 20¢ RAVIOLI 20¢
TOMATO SOUCE 20¢



Interrogations are a huge part of breaking the cases you're working.



UPDATE



RELEASE DATE: SEPTEMBER

LA Noire

Crimes and misdemeanors in Los Angeles

PS3

It's been a fair old time in the making, but *LA Noire* is finally closing in on its final approach to your PS3 and it promises to be so much more than we might have anticipated. Sure, it's an open-world game involving fast cars, loose women and murder each way you turn, but this is not *Grand Theft Auto*. This is an entirely new breed of sandbox experience that stands apart from anything any developer has attempted before, let alone Rockstar.

We all had high hopes for *LA Noire*, but dogged as it has been by rumours of

cracker in the making. As each chapter of the game unfolds you will lead Phelps to a new crime scene and attempt to gather whatever evidence is available to build your case. That could mean chasing up receipts with local stores, questioning witnesses at the roadside or even beating up on a suspect if you absolutely have to. The extremes and intensity of your investigation is really up to you.

Questioning or interrogating is really at the heart of what *LA Noire* is all about, more so than its open world or re-created

matter how insignificant, is jotted down and can be referred to during your interviews. Think something a witness is telling you doesn't match the evidence? Confront them with it and see how they react. It's a simple enough mechanic, but when you consider that all you will have to go on is your personal intuition and your ability to read the reactions of these brilliantly rendered characters, the possibilities and the stakes are about as broad as you will ever encounter in a videogame.

You won't be working alone of course. As is typical of the cop drama genre you'll get numerous partners depending on the type of case you're assigned and they could prove very beneficial. If you get a little stuck or seemingly run out of options in a situation your partner will be on hand to point you in a new direction or perhaps just nudge you towards what it is you've been looking for. There have been hints that you'll also be able to use them during interrogations to pull the old good cop, bad cop act. So, if you haven't guessed it by now, *LA Noire* is a very exciting little game, but then we've come to expect such things from Rockstar. It may have been some time in the making, but the wait appears to have been worth it.

Team Bondi, based in Sydney, Australia, is the developer behind *LA Noire*. You can find out more at www.teambondi.com or www.rockstargames.com/lanoire.

It's an open-world game involving fast cars, loose women and murder each way you turn, but this is not *Grand Theft Auto*

platform exclusivity (it is firmly multiformat now, but was once thought to be PS3 only) we were beginning to fear for it. As it is Rockstar has done what Sony is rarely capable of doing itself and that's keep the game firmly under wraps so that only now are we beginning to get the full picture of what Team Bondi has been working on.

By now you will hopefully know that *LA Noire* revolves around the career of a young LAPD officer in 1947. Cole Phelps is an up-and-coming member of the force and in your hands he could be a master crime

Forties Los Angeles. Thanks to advanced motion-capture techniques from Depth Analysis you should be able to read the facial expressions, ticks and body language of the people you talk to and like a poker player will reveal, everybody has a tale. Exploiting those weaknesses through forcing, accusing or coaxing your target could break the case or lead you down a dead end.

The most important tool you have at your disposal then is not your gun or your car, but your notepad. Every piece of information you gather on a case, no

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Groundbreaking new mo-cap techniques for amazing character animation.
- An open world to explore, faithfully re-creating post-war Los Angeles.
- Proper detective work required to crack real-world cases from the Forties.
- Rockstar tackling gumshoe noir drama? Sounds like a winner to us.

READ ME

Corruption runs rife in the Los Angeles Police Department of 1947 and Cole Phelps will need to navigate the internal politics of the police force as well as his own investigations.



Working your way from street cop to homicide detective will be a journey.



PREVIEW



● Armoured man suit and big gun? Check.



● The guy he's shooting doesn't look like a Russian in the traditional sense.

RELEASE DATE: SEPTEMBER

Vanquish

Conquer, subjugate, defeat, crush, annihilate and overcome

The fourth game to come out of Platinum Games' four-title deal with Sega has, once again, got us all hot under the collar. Not in the same way *Bayonetta* did, with its ridiculous, over-the-top action and naked witches. Nor in the same way as *Infinite Space* on DS or *MadWorld* on Wii, with their insane difficulty spikes and lashings of chainsaw-induced claret, respectively. No, *Vanquish* has us uncomfortably excited as it is being

favourite PlayStation 2 games ever made. That's a good enough reason to be excited, right?

We hope it will be, as we have to admit that on paper *Vanquish* doesn't sound very interesting. The Russians are once again the enemy in a futuristic setting, capturing a US-built space station and unleashing a solar-powered attack on San Francisco, before threatening to take out New York unless the Americans surrender. The Americans aren't very happy

the Russians hijacked to launch the attack on terrestrial US soil. Players take control of Sam Burns as he dons the experimental suit, codenamed 'ARS' and fights back against the Red Menace. What this translates to in game form is a third-person shooter where you play as a man in a power suit that enables him to run faster, boost, shields him and other such things as that. As we said, *on paper* it doesn't sound particularly thrilling.

But then, if you were to judge *God Hand* on paper it wouldn't sound like the most inspiring of things. Simply reading about *Bayonetta* never really got our juices flowing *that* much – we had to wait until we saw the game running, or until we got to play it before the excitement really kicked in. With the combined pedigree of Shinji Mikami and Platinum behind *Vanquish* we can't help but have faith this will be an interesting, exciting game when it finally releases at the end of the year. Those expecting a

spiritual (gun-based, futuristic) sequel to *God Hand* are likely to be let down, though, and Mikami himself admitted he enjoyed 'too much' freedom with the cult classic. *Vanquish* will be reined in to give it far more mass-market appeal – we do hope this doesn't mean it will be dumbed or dulled down in any way. If only because we're rather excited by it right now.

The game will be a purely single-player affair, with the developer deciding against including a multiplayer mode. While this may seem like an odd thing to leave out of a third-person shooter – we pretty much expect an online mode as standard these days – it does at least mean the entire focus in creating the game will be on making the campaign as good as it can possibly be. We have nothing to go on but past success and hope for the future right now and even though a dispassionate list of the game's setting may have left us cold on reading, we can't shake the feeling that *Vanquish* has a great deal of potential. Mikami has done it before, Platinum has done it before: this could be something special.

Vanquish has us uncomfortably excited as it is being helmed by one Shinji Mikami; father of the Resident Evil series

helmed by one Shinji Mikami: father of the *Resident Evil* series; the man who made *Resident Evil 4* go off in such an incredible new direction; executive producer on the likes of *Viewtiful Joe* and *Killer7*; and – probably most importantly – the director of *God Hand*, one of our

with this, unsurprisingly, and counter the Ruskie offensive with... well, a bloke in a white power suit (along with some other special forces types). The action takes place in the 51st US state – named Providence – which is actually the solar power-producing station

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- We love Platinum Games, creator of brilliant releases such as *Bayonetta*.
- We can't wait to see where Platinum goes with the genre.
- We love Shinji Mikami, the mastermind behind the awesome *Resident Evil* series.
- It could be a new *God Hand*. With guns. It won't, but we can dream.

READ ME

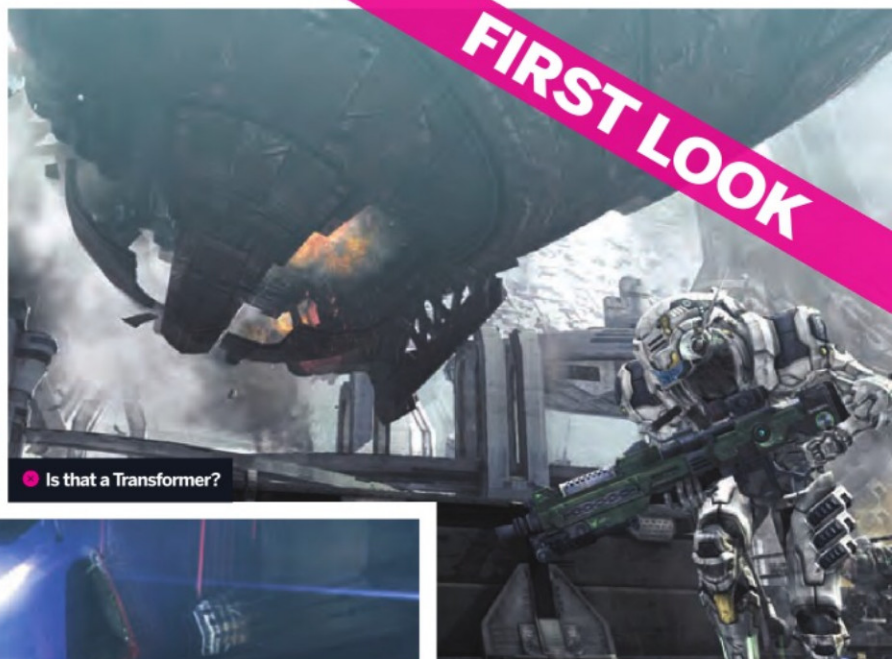
Aside from the *Resident Evil* series, Shinji Mikami has been involved in some of our favourite Capcom properties. Which is why we're excited by *Vanquish*.

Vanquish is being developed by Platinum Games. Check out www.platinumgames.com/games/vanquish for more details.

● Cover-based gameplay: but what will *Vanquish* bring that's new?



● Is that a Transformer?



FIRST IN LINE

No dodgy PS3 ports this time around

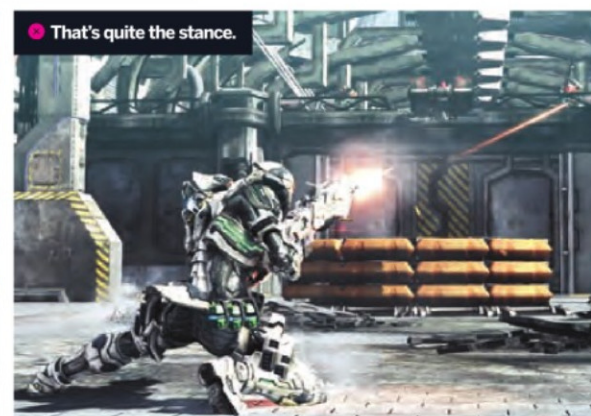


PLATINUM'S LAST RELEASE on PS3, *Bayonetta*, didn't fare too well when compared to the 360 version. Fortunately for us here in Sonyland, this time around we're first in line – *Vanquish* is being developed with PS3 as the lead platform, with the game to be ported to Xbox once it is up and running on PlayStation. Shinji Mikami admitted this was to avoid a dodgy port à la Sega's conversion of the (still fantastic) witch-'em-up, so it gives us hope we will be playing the absolute, definitive version of *Vanquish*. At the very least they should be able to cut down on loading times...

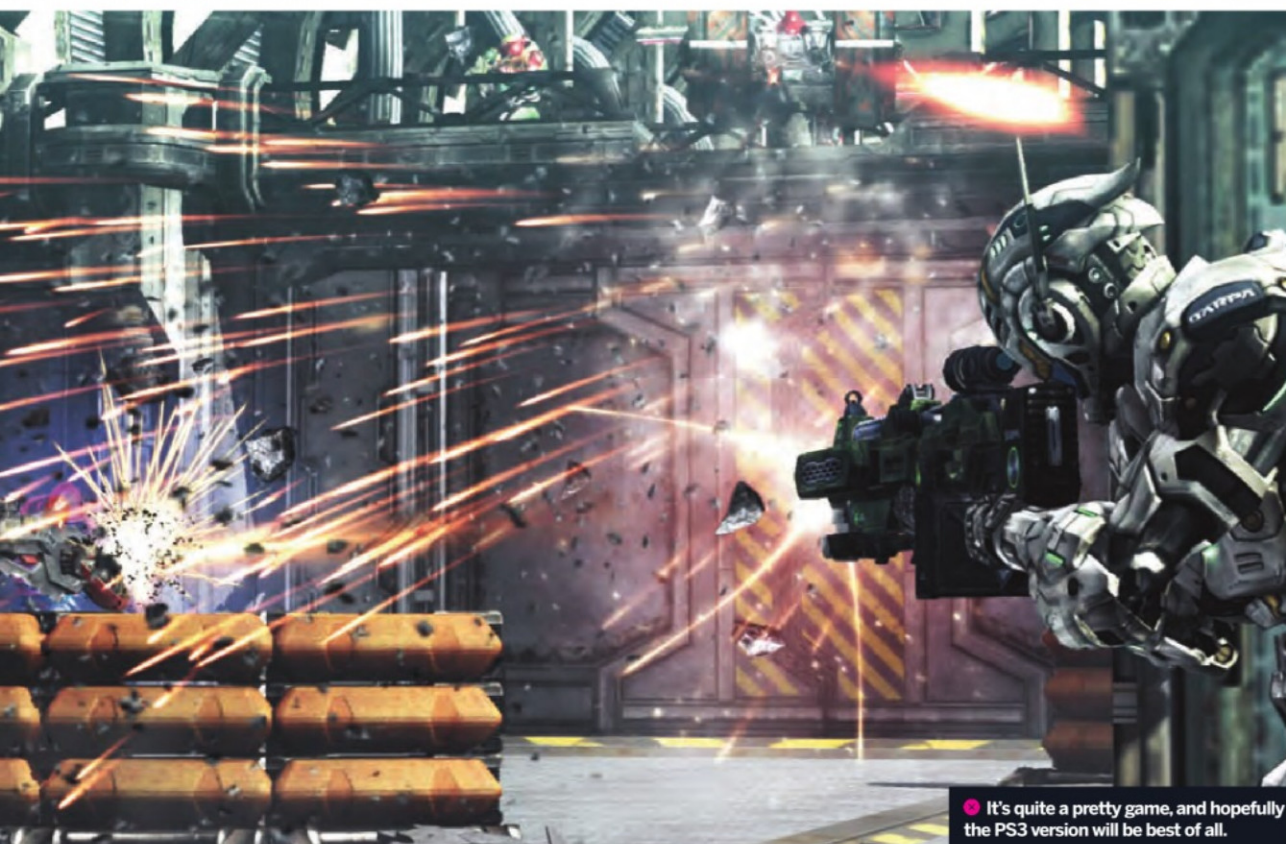
● This is an ARS-augmented punch. Say that out loud.



● That's quite the stance.



● It's quite a pretty game, and hopefully the PS3 version will be best of all.



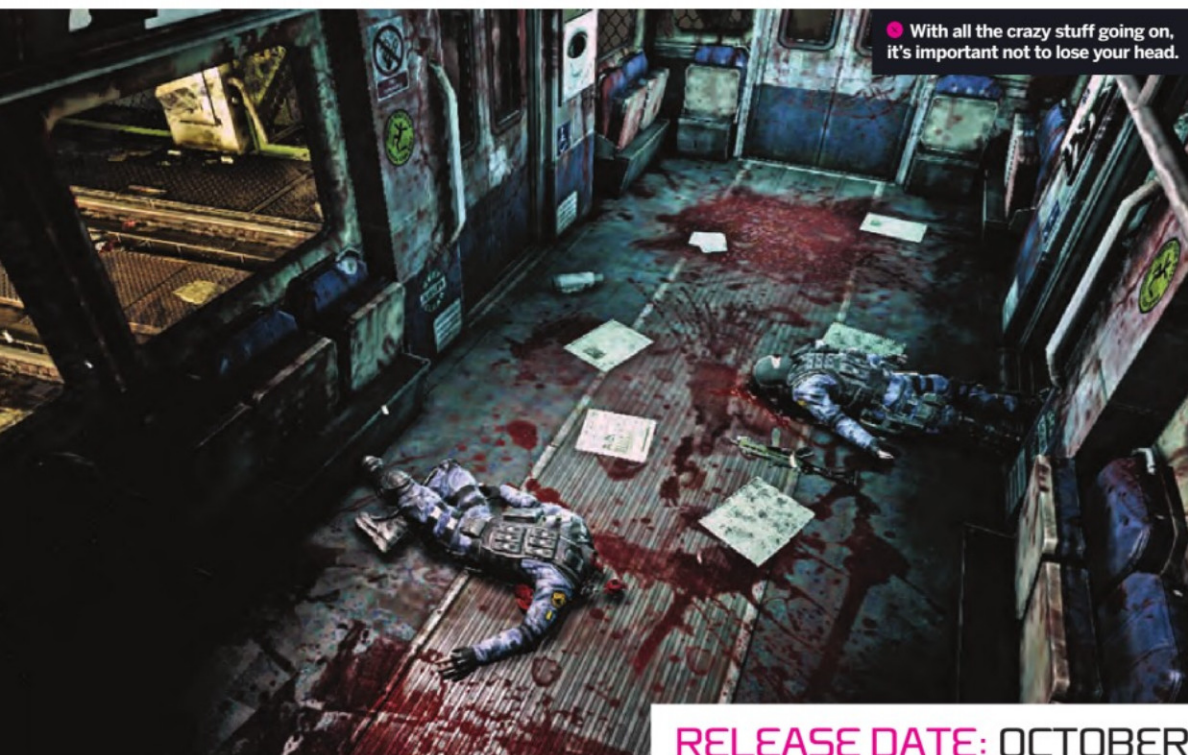
PREVIEW

Just as in *F.E.A.R. 2*, big, stompy mech-suits will be driveable and will kick ass.



Fettel has gone from out-and-out villain to antihero.

With all the crazy stuff going on, it's important not to lose your head.



The sky is red because of all the energy overspilling from Alma's very being.



RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER

F.3.A.R.

See that? That's your mum, that is

Change of developer alert! Change of developer alert! Now, it might sound to you as if we're being alarmist there, but we are fierce proponents of development talent over brand recognition, so the first question we ask whenever a sequel is announced is: same developer?

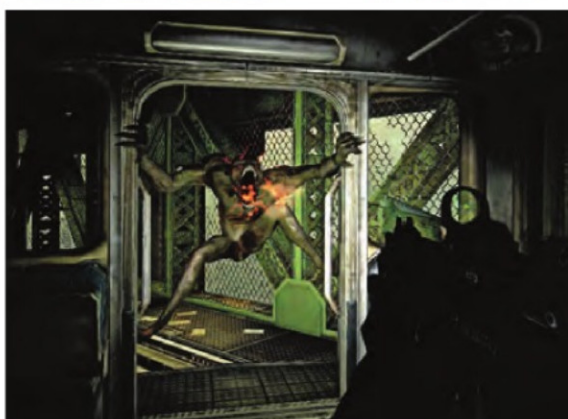
The answer we'll want to hear obviously depends largely on what we thought of the previous game in the series. Some franchises get new developers because they're crying out for them, while others get new developers because their original developer is too busy working on something new and exciting to churn out more of the same on demand. In the case of *F.3.A.R.* we

suspect that the latter is the case, which, first of all, makes us wonder what series creator Monolith Productions is up to instead and, second, makes us inclined to scrutinise the new developer, Day 1 Studios, very closely indeed.

Now, we liked both of the first two *F.E.A.R.* games, so we'd rather Monolith was making the third, too, but if there has to be a change then we can see why Day 1 Studios would be a natural choice. The developer has experience of the *F.E.A.R.* franchise, having ported the original game to both the 360 and PS3, and the PC expansions to the 360 as *F.E.A.R. Files*. But if you've played *F.E.A.R.* on the PS3, you might not think this is such a good thing. It

was not a good port. However, to cut Day 1 some slack, this was in the early days of the PS3, when even the best studios struggled with the PlayStation 3's architecture and dodgy ports were the norm. They were dark days indeed...

So we're sure the bods at Day 1 will have got to grips with the PlayStation 3 by now. There were certainly no PS3-specific problems with the title the company has released since, *Fracture*. Alright, so *Fracture* wasn't that great either, but it was solid enough; nothing wrong with it per se. But really, there's no getting around it, we're not talking about a proven developer of a calibre on a par with Monolith here, so we can't help feeling a little nervous





about *F.3.A.R.*, but we should be fair. Developers can go from making mediocre games to great ones when given the right opportunities. So let's see what we know about *F.3.A.R.* so far and give ourselves some reasons to be cheerful.

Fans of horror comics and horror movies will be pleased that two leading horror writers have been brought onto the project

First up, fans of horror comics and horror movies will be pleased that two leading horror writers have been brought onto the project as consultants, namely John Carpenter and Steve Niles. John Carpenter is a

horror movie legend, most famous for writing, directing, producing, scoring and even acting in the original 1978 version of *Halloween*, and Steve Niles is a comic-book author best known for writing *30 Days Of Night*, for which he also

wrote the screenplay of the movie adaptation. There's no doubting their horror credentials, but neither has ever been involved in a game before and the transition isn't always easily made.

F.3.A.R.'s other main selling point is that it will feature co-op in the main campaign, both online and offline, with one player as Point Man, the player-character from the first *F.E.A.R.*, and the other playing as Paxton Fettel, the villain from the first *F.E.A.R.* who is also Point Man's brother. Both have superhuman powers, with Point Man boasting incredible speed and strength and Fettel able to do all kinds of weird supernatural stuff like telekinesis and possession. Maybe we shouldn't be so scared about the change in developer after all.

F.3.A.R. is being developed by Day 1 Studios. Check the website for more details: www.day1studios.com

EMBRY-OH NO!

Born to Wade Hell

IF YOU'VE PLAYED *F.E.A.R. 2* to its horrific conclusion then you'll remember that Alma Wade – the girl at the core of all the horror that takes place in... well, everywhere really – uses the player-character, Beckett, to impregnate herself. She will give birth to whatever it is in there during the time frame of the *F.3.A.R.* campaign and her contractions will cause rifts between the real world and her world. So basically, weird stuff is going to happen with increased frequency until Point Man and Paxton's sibling is born. Then, presumably, things will begin to get even weirder.



WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- The entire campaign will be playable in two-player co-op.
- John Carpenter's on board and he knows how to do scary.
- Player two gets to play as Fettel whose playing style is totally different to Point Man's.
- Psychological horror and gory violence all under one roof.

READ ME

F.3.A.R. will use a 'generative scare system' whereby the pant-pooing bits won't all be rigidly scripted, so you'll get surprised even on a second playthrough.

PREVIEW



EXTINGUISHED GENTLEMEN

In the event of incoming fire...

IN KANE & LYNCH 2, fire extinguishers aren't for putting out fires, they're for throwing at enemies and shooting so that they explode, hurting and disorientating your foes. Presumably having found that it was too fiddly to expect you to aim at the canister after throwing it, IO has made it so you simply have to pull the trigger after throwing it and Kane will automatically score a hit first time, unleashing a huge, explosive cloud of carbon dioxide powder into the air. If you're more of a traditionalist, fear not – there are plenty of explosive gas bottles lying around, too.



● If you fancy picking up a cheap copy of an old *Hitman* game, Shanghai is the place to go.



HANDS-ON



● If you've ever wondered what Terry Nutkins did after *The Really Wild Show*...



● You're not exactly *supposed* to kill innocent people, but it doesn't seem to matter if you do.



● Environments like this are definitely the best thing about *Kane & Lynch 2*.



RELEASE DATE: AUGUST

Kane & Lynch 2: Dog Days

Rollin' wit the Lynch mob

The word 'gritty' gets used a lot in the entertainment industry, especially in videogames. Overused really. Way overused. Usually it means something is gratuitously violent, contains swearing and/or is just generally a bit nasty and gets the word 'gritty' slapped on it in an attempt to lend it some credibility and make it seem like there's more to it than mere shock value.

Perhaps that's why IO Interactive has tended to steer clear of 'gritty' when describing *Kane & Lynch 2*, instead choosing 'real' as its mantra. Not 'realistic' mind, but 'real' – it's about the feel of the experience, not about simulating anything with meticulous accuracy. Fact is, though, *Kane & Lynch 2* is gritty, not in the juvenile shock value sense, but in the same sense as a documentary where the film crew keeps getting beaten up. There's a sense that it's all going horribly wrong, and that's exactly what compels you to stick with it.

IO has been conscious of not giving away too many story details, and the levels we've seen and played have been out of context, but we know

that the general gist is that Kane and Lynch are reunited in Shanghai when they're both recruited for a job that requires their own unique brand of lunacy. The job does not go to plan and this sets off a whole chain of events, most of which are very bad news for all concerned. In the level we played Kane and Lynch are evading large numbers of police in the back streets of the city, while Lynch seems to be talking about rescuing a girl. Sounds like some kind of 'back into the breach' act of gallantry is on the cards. We also saw another level where Kane and Lynch are in a car with a gang boss and his bodyguards. The car is rammed and the group is attacked by a large number of gangsters. Kane and Lynch take responsibility for clearing the way for the gang boss, who doesn't seem terribly grateful. We don't learn much about how they wound up in this situation, but one thing is clear – it's all gone tits up again.

One thing we were relieved to discover when getting our first hands-on with the game was that the distorted, lo-fi audiovisual style wasn't anything like as gimmicky and

distracting as we thought it might be when we were watching someone else play. Despite our scepticism, we found it all felt surprisingly natural and really fed into the atmosphere and mood. We're not sure if it made it all seem more *real*, but it definitely helped us to engage with the experience and, y'know, get *into* it.

A moment that stood out for us was when we came to a door at the bottom of a flight of stairs and kicked it open. A SWAT cop was waiting on the other side and we were slow to react so he opened fire first, knocking us to the ground. Basically we panicked, holding down the fire button, hoping we could kill him before he finished us off. Fortunately, we did. The whole thing took just a few seconds but was very effective in instilling a feeling of desperation and of the aforementioned grittiness. It's difficult to explain how it did it because 'in the moment' we weren't conscious of it, but the audiovisual style definitely fed into that feeling.

IO has done an admirable job of balancing and blending a wide variety of effects. Where we feared the various distortions and deliberate

flaws might be too conspicuous and serve only to draw attention to their own artifice, we actually found that the mix was subtle enough and effectively removed the gloss normally inherent to games, even the 'gritty' ones. That absence of gloss is undoubtedly *Kane & Lynch 2*'s biggest strength, but there's a flip side to it, too.

While the audiovisual effects and environment design are all excellent, the character modelling and animation is lagging behind at the moment. Lynch is low on detail and his animation is stiff and awkward. He just doesn't really look like he fits in and has a 'stuck on the background' look like he's wandered in from a lower-budget, or less finished, game by mistake. Other characters generally don't look so out of place, at least until you shoot them, at which point we did spot some glaring ragdoll issues. On several occasions enemies would soar vertically upwards from just one bullet impact. Not fundamental problems, but they do need fixing.

Should they be fixed then we expect *Kane & Lynch 2* to be a big improvement on the original, and we're optimistic that it could even break some new ground with its intriguing characters, story and presentation style even if, gameplay-wise, it's staying on familiar ground.

Kane & Lynch 2: Dog Days is being developed by IO Interactive. Check the website for more details: www.ioi.dk

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- So gritty that during the next cold snap you could de-ice a road with it.
- Lead characters being developed all the time through dialogue.
- Features some rather impressive cover shooter mechanics.
- A unique, 'gritty' atmosphere that is unlike any other game.

READ ME

Shanghai was chosen as the game's location because it's a city of stark contrasts, with shiny new skyscrapers right next to slums.

PREVIEW



● That red button on the right is the Jensen Button (not really).

● Codemasters reckons it's created the most complex weather system ever seen in a racing game.



● The debris physics are looking sweet, which is handy given how often we're bound to crash.



RELEASE DATE: SEPTEMBER

F1 2010

Yet another new team for the Formula 1 licence

Formula 1 games have had – if you'll pardon the massive, shameless pun – a chequered history. Unlike any other sport with the kind of enormous global popularity boasted by F1, it's been unable to find a long-term home at just one publisher, who can then churn out a new iteration every year just before the start of the season. This has meant that releases have been sporadic, and that their quality has been patchy. The last really good F1 game we can remember was *Formula 1 '97*, which was developed by Bizarre Creations, which has since gone on to establish itself as a leading racing game studio with *Metropolis Street Racer*, *Project Gotham Racing* and now *Blur*. Since 1997, though, development and publishing duties for F1 games have been passed around all over the place with the licence ultimately ending up in limbo after 2007's forgettable *F1 Championship Edition*. As F1 fans and gamers, all we've really wanted all this

time is for a developer and publisher with an established and respected pedigree in the racing game arena to take the Formula 1 licence under its aerodynamic wing and give it the love, care and attention it deserves. A company like... Codemasters.

Yes, last year Codies finally stepped up to the plate and took on responsibility for official Formula 1 videogames across all formats. But rather than rushing into developing for all formats and ending up blowing it on the first lap, so to speak, the studio has bided its time. Last year saw *F1 2009* games on just the PSP and Wii so that an appropriate amount of time and effort could be put into the proper, high-definition versions in 2010. In fact, they're not even being rushed out for the start of the season. A commercially dubious decision perhaps, but one that's sure to be of benefit to the finished product.

Now, the first thing you need to know, and possibly the only thing you need to know, is that *F1 2010* is being

put together at the same studio and using the same digital nuts and bolts as both *Colin McRae: DiRT* games and as *Race Driver: GRID*. All three of the above rank among the very best racing simulations ever made

racing each race hoping to pick up as many points as possible before the end of the season, you'll essentially be playing as a character, who you'll develop as the game goes on. We're not talking in-depth RPG mechanics

There's every reason to expect *F1 2010* to be on a par with both *Colin McRae: DiRT* games and *Race Driver: GRID*

and there's every reason to expect *F1 2010* to be on a par with them. Codemasters certainly seems to be taking very much the same approach to the design and structure of the career mode.

Just as in *GRID* and *DiRT 2*, you won't just be picking a team then

here, but you will start off as a nobody and gradually build up a reputation, personality and fans mostly through your exploits on the track, but also through interactions with the media and with various teams and rivals off it.

That might all sound a little bit silly to hardcore racing fans, but they should

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

● It's being made by the same people who brought us *GRID* and *DiRT*.

● Attention to detail on a level never seen before in an F1 game.

● Codemasters didn't rush it out as soon as the licence was signed up.

● It's good to see the F1 licence making a return. We really hope it's worth the wait.



● If this looks like the 2009 season to you, then that's because it is. The details are just placeholder for now.

THE RIGHT FORMULA

The man who ensures F1 2010 is as realistic as possible

CODEMASTERS HAS BROUGHT in Formula 1 driver and commentator Anthony Davidson as an advisor on the game. His name might not be as familiar as Lewis Hamilton or Jenson Button, but Davidson has had a long and varied career in motorsport, winning his first British kart racing championship in 1993, at the age of just 14. He's since gone on to compete in Formula A, Formula Ford, Formula Renault, Formula 3 and Formula 1, and currently works as a commentator for BBC Radio Five Live. At least he's more famous than his brother Andy, who was in the first series of *Big Brother*. Um... no, we can't remember him either.

know they'll be well catered for, too. The racing itself promises to look and feel more realistic than any Formula 1 game that's gone before, with a host of pernickety features that only the hardcore could possibly understand, like rubbering, blistering, marbling, puddles and the new and exciting Kinetic Energy Recovery System, which is basically like a *Knight Rider*-style turbo boost only real.

So yes, we are very excited and only hope that *F1 2010* manages to stick to its estimated September due date, otherwise it will miss the 2010 Formula 1 season altogether.

F1 2010 is being developed by Codemasters Studios. Check the website for more details: www.codemasters.co.uk

READ ME

Official Formula 1 game from the new licence holder, Codemasters. Expect quality on a par with the excellent *Race Driver: GRID* and *Colin McRae: DiRT*.



● The variable weather doesn't just affect tactics, it looks really pretty, too.

RELEASE DATE: SEPTEMBER

Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions

Four-dimensional gaming on your PS3

Best superhero game ever. No, not this one, it's not even finished yet. We are, of course, referring to *Batman: Arkham Asylum*, a dark, moody stealth-action experience that appealed to *Batman* fans and gamers in equally large measures. Anyone making a superhero game following Rocksteady Studios' sterling effort better have been taking notes. Hmm... looks like Activision and Beenox were doing just that.

Dark... check. Moody... check. Stealth... check. This Spider-Man Noir fella certainly has something very Batman about him, and we can see him lending himself very well to the kind of gameplay we enjoyed so much in *Arkham Asylum*. But we're not just looking at a *Spider-Man Noir* game here. *Shattered Dimensions*, as the name sort of suggests, is a game that spans four different *Spider-Man* universes. So far we have *The Amazing Spider-Man* and *Spider-Man Noir*, with two more dimensions yet to be revealed.

We've racked our comic-addled brains and come up with six other versions of *Spider-Man* it could be. First there's *Spider-Man 2099*, which would certainly

make for a distinct contrast to each of the two we have so far. There'd be lasers and everything. The smart money's definitely on that one. Then there's *Ultimate Spider-Man*, which is a popular Marvel universe no doubt, but not *that* different to *The Amazing Spider-Man*, especially when the art style for *Amazing* has already been taken some way towards the more caricatured look of *Ultimate* in this game as it is. Next we've got the Scarlet Spider, which is a different version of Spider-Man, but technically not a different dimension to *The Amazing Spider-Man*. Iron Spider, the suit made for Spidey by Tony 'Iron Man' Stark would be pretty cool but, again, it doesn't belong to a different dimension. Then there's the six-armed Man-Spider, but that's just silly. A more iconic choice would be the black Symbiote suit, which has appeared in many different strands of the *Spider-Man* legend, so perhaps that represents one of the dimensions somehow. We'll just have to wait and see.

Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions is being developed by Beenox. Check the website for more details: www.beenox.com

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Four distinct *Spider-Man* adventures in one game.
- Who can honestly say that they don't like *Spider-Man*?
- Spider-Man Noir's first appearance in a game.
- He can do anything a spider can, except fit under a sofa.

READ ME

The boundaries between four different dimensions of *Spider-Man* are breached in this new story by veteran Marvel writer Dan Slott.



HANGING BLACK

The dark night returns

IN MANY WAYS Spider-Man Noir is more spider-like in his methods than the more traditional versions of Spider-Man. He's sneaky and sinister and lays traps for his victims, stringing them up with his webs without any regard for their dignity or humanity. He can also often be found in the bath.

WEBBED FEET

It's all kicking off



GAMEPLAY-WISE THE *Amazing Spider-Man* quarter of the game looks to be very much in the vein of most other *Spider-Man* games. It's a beat-'em-up with a bit of web-slinging thrown in here and there. Let's hope there's a bit more to it than button-bashing.

INTRODUCING...



AMAZING EYES

Spotting the difference

WE THOUGHT AT first that this was Ultimate Spider-Man because of the cartoony art style and slightly exaggerated features, but thorough examination proved that it was actually the Amazing one. Ultimate Spider-Man's eyes go up to much more of a point at the outer edges.

SPIDER CELL

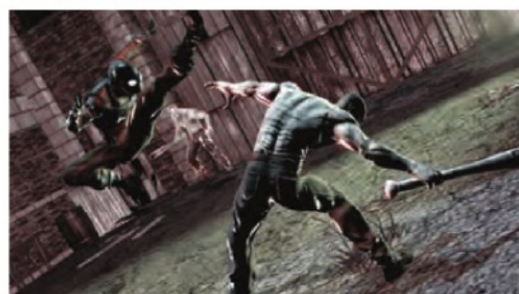
He's a snooper hero



SPIDER-MAN NOIR is set in 1933, during the Great Depression when the global economy got so bad that no one could even afford daylight. And you thought the credit crunch was bad! This suits Spider-Man just fine, though, as it makes it easier to sneak up on unwitting henchmen.

PETER-M-UP

Black and white belt



JUST BECAUSE HE likes hiding in the shadows at night, doesn't mean Spidey Noir is averse to a spot of fisticuffs. He has much the same superhuman strength and agility as the modern-day Spider-Man – a sort of self-taught hyper kung fu.

PREVIEW



RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER

Test Drive Unlimited 2

Whoah! We're going to Ibiza

Test Drive Unlimited, ironically some might say, did have its limits. If you were to be pedantic, you'd insist that it be renamed 'Test Drive Very Big'. These limits included the fact that it was set on the real-life Hawaiian island of Oahu, which while very big for a game environment, did have limits, namely beaches and cliffs and fences. Similarly, there were limits to how many cars, homes, paint jobs and outfits you could buy. Although again, the selection of each was pretty big. The amount of damage you could do to your car and the number of changes to weather and lighting were also very limited. None in both cases, in fact.

So, the next Test Drive game is keeping the pedant-baiting name and sticking a '2' on the end, but you can think of it as 'Test Drive Bigger' or 'Test Drive Even Less Limited' if you like. Just like we sometimes think of *Final Fantasy XIII* as 'Latest Fantasy XIII' because we already know the next one's on the way.

Anyway, in Test Drive Unlimited 2, all of those things mentioned in the opening paragraph of this preview will be less limited, which is perhaps just a convoluted way of saying there's more stuff in the sequel, but it's true however you put it and that's what counts. So, yes,

more cars. How many more has not yet been specified, but definitely more, and they'll all be fancy, expensive, exclusive, exotic and, ironically some might say, limited-edition-type models. Oh yes, this game won't force you to put-put about the place in a Daihatsu Mira for race after race before you can afford something that can go over 100mph. You'll be behind the wheel of luxury models as soon as you set foot on the island. Which island? Ibiza, the Spanish island famous for being ruined by hard-partying British tourists, although technically that's not true. Most of Ibiza is still as quaint and as picturesque as it ever was, so there will be plenty of gorgeous scenery to gawp at, and hopefully very few stag parties to swerve around.

One thing that surprises us about this choice of island is that Ibiza is quite a lot smaller than Oahu, less than half the land area in fact. However, much of Oahu's land area is taken up by volcanoes and reservations that don't have roads on, whereas Ibiza is crisscrossed by roads pretty much all over, so hopefully it won't feel any more limited. It'll also help to make it feel big if there's a greater number and variety of things to do and improved level of visual detail, and we're expecting both.

What's perhaps even better than 'more stuff than before' is 'some stuff where before there was none stuff', although not better in the grammatical sense we'll admit. The stuff we're referring to is the car damage stuff and the dynamic environment stuff, both of which are completely new features that weren't in the first game at all.

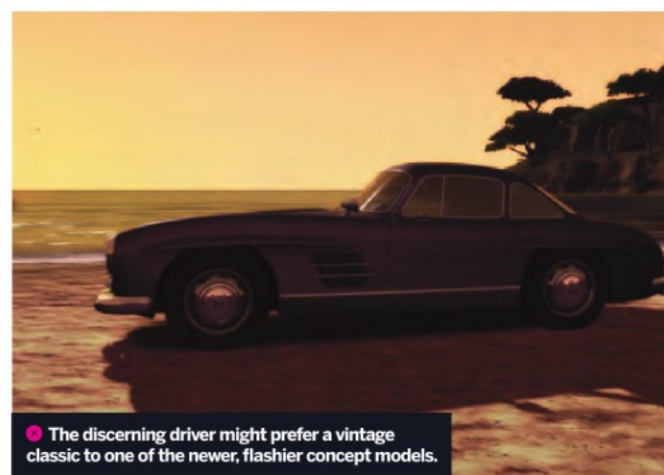
The bods at Eden Games have presumably noticed that *Gran Turismo* has car damage now, and thought that if even Polyphony's doing it, they'd look like plums if they didn't. We've not seen anything of the damage yet, but it's certainly a welcome addition, and we'd also expect improved collision physics to go with it.

The new weather system and night/day cycle might just be aesthetic improvements, but aesthetics are very important in a game that's as much about the petrolhead playboy fantasy as it is about the gameplay itself. Overall, nothing revolutionary to report but, given that the PlayStation 3 never got the first game, Test Drive Unlimited 2 should provide a fresh, unique spin on the racing genre for the Sony faithful.

Test Drive Unlimited 2 is being developed by Eden Games. Check the website for more details: www.edengames.com

Who needs volcanoes when you've got little windmills?

Cleaning your wheels with baking soda toothpaste can have amazing results.



The discerning driver might prefer a vintage classic to one of the newer, flashier concept models.



WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Cars now take damage when you crash them into things. Everyone's doing it now.
- A completely new massive island to explore in the form of clubbers' paradise Ibiza.
- Aesthetic improvements such as dynamic weather and a night/day cycle.
- First Massively Open Online Racer to come to the PlayStation 3.

READ ME

Sequel to the innovative 'Massively Open Online Racer' featuring a day/night cycle, weather, car damage and the island of Ibiza.



● Gumpert is the rather crap sounding name for a German manufacturer of very sexy sports cars like this one.



● A racing game without a Dodge Viper is like... um... a thing that has something important and familiar missing from it.



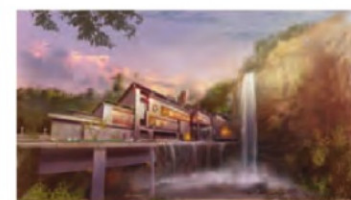
● This is a Pagani Zonda, not to be confused with a panini or a Honda.



VROOM WITH A VIEW

You'll need somewhere to park

KEEPING YOUR COLLECTION of cars in some sort of virtual, infinitely spacious garage that might as well just be a list is for poor people. Proper millionaire playboys keep their expensive supercars in the expensive garages of expensive houses. They don't even bother using the rest of the house, except maybe the wardrobe, where they keep all of their expensive designer clothes. Eden's concept art shows the interiors of various luxury pads as well as the exteriors, which might mean you get to do stuff indoors. But then it might mean that you see them in the background when you pick 'SAVE' from a menu. Either way, lovely wood-beam ceiling.





● Weapon loadouts can be customised and swapped in-game.

● There are some massive enemies to battle.



RELEASE DATE: JUNE

Transformers: War For Cybertron

We chat to game director Matt Tieger



War For Cybertron is aimed at a 'mature' market – but have you had to rein things in at all

to maintain a broad appeal?

We had to kind of re-shape what you would expect as a *Transformers* fan of a *Transformers* game, meaning we had to redo the story layout. I couldn't tell a real, good, solid story with branching paths – I needed a new story structure which I think will be different to *Transformers* fans. I don't think there was anything that other games would call 'mature content' that really makes sense for *Transformers* – they don't do drugs, they don't drink – so those things don't make a lot of sense for *Transformers*. But what we did do is focus on making things make a lot of cohesive sense. Certain other games have done stories that just don't hold up and I think because we're older, more connoisseurs of story, I think we had to make a story that was cohesive and logical.

Was the game always planned as a co-operative experience?

Yes, it had to be. Co-op is a significant undertaking for any development team, there are so many bugs and issues that come out of co-op because – what do you do different from me, we both run in different directions – it's an order of magnitude more difficult, so we had to make that choice early. By making that choice early we made sure that everything we did worked over the network. I find that creative people are most creative when you put them in a box and say "here are the rules that you have to live in" and so by putting that box on us it allowed us to really express ourselves creatively within the confines of a co-op experience. That was a *really* early choice that we made.

What influences have there been on *War For Cybertron*?

As with a lot of things there are some *Gears Of War* elements... but we also had to find our own way with a lot of things specific to co-op because you have your vehicle at any time and you can be a kilometre away like that [snaps fingers]. So we really had to rethink about level layouts in a way that, honestly, doesn't apply to any other games. The only games

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- It's being made 'by gamers, for gamers,' apparently. Which has got to be good.
- We have no idea if it will work, but the idea of a 'mature' *Transformers* seems very interesting.

- Optimus Prime has his proper voice, which makes us all quivery inside.
- We've played it and it's actually quite a lot of fun.



that have some degree of similarity to our issues that we deal with in terms of AI and level layout would be *Iron Man* and *Dark Void*. They're the only things that are even close – [their] characters are functionally Starscream, but that's just one of our vehicle types. We have four, so it made for some very challenging and fun game design issues.

How much freedom did you have to redesign characters and create a new – canonical – story for *Transformers*?

A lot. We've had a lot of freedom and I think that comes from establishing very early on some real healthy respect on both sides, with us and with Hasbro. Hasbro was great about us in the sense that they knew we had done our work, knew that we were *Transformers* fans, so they gave us some pretty wide latitude to work on stuff. It was rather intimidating to slide our first Bumblebee across the table and say "we're going to redesign one of the best-known characters that you have"... We really won them over, I think, on the vehicle mode with Bumblebee because that was *really* inspired by the Generation One cartoon and that's where we took most of our inspiration from. Same thing for the story – they allowed us a lot of latitude because we had done our homework.

Transformers: War For Cybertron is being developed by High Moon Studios. Check out www.transformersgame.com for more details.

READ ME

Set before the events of the Generation One cartoon, *War For Cybertron* tells the newly written, canonical story of how Optimus got his Prime.

● Transformer designs should be recognisable to fans of the original cartoon.



● You can transform as and when you want to.

● It's hard to complain about a metallic look when it's based on a planet made of metal.



BUT WHAT'S IT LIKE?

We played it, so we can tell you

THE EASIEST COMPARISON to make would be *Gears Of War* meets giant stompy robots with three-player co-op, but that would be lazy. Instead of cover there's clever use of flanking and the transforming element seems to bring some real strategy to the fray. It's too early to form a coherent judgement, but this doesn't look like it will be the letdown some are expecting.

● Optimus, before he picked up his Prime title.



PREVIEW



RELEASE DATE: JULY

Lara Croft And The Guardian Of Light

Like Angel Of Darkness, except not at all

Now that the *Tomb Raider* franchise has been successfully rescued from the certifiably non-brilliant Core Design, developer Crystal Dynamics is ready to take gaming's most eligible bachelorette in a fresh, new direction. Dropping the *Tomb Raider* moniker altogether, it's done just that with *Lara Croft And The Guardian Of Light*, an exclusively downloadable adventure which mashes the series' signature puzzle-solving and gap-jumping gameplay with *Gauntlet*-esque, arcadey goodness. It's a formula that works surprisingly well.

The *Guardian Of Light* is equally notable for being Lara's first co-op outing, allowing a friend to take control of titular guardian Totec, the 2,000-year-old leader of the Army of Light. Both characters are equipped with their own unique tools for helping each other traverse the game's dangerous tombs and traps: Totec has an unlimited supply of spears which he can stick into walls at varying heights. Totec himself is too heavy to use these to his advantage

but Lara can put them to good use. Lara utilises her grappling hook – first popularised in *Tomb Raider: Legend* – to topple loose objects, swing across bottomless hazards, or even pull Totec up. The only flaw we saw in the entire hour we spent with the game was the fact that Lara, who weighs about a fifth as much as her new partner, has no problems supporting Totec in impossible situations. It may sound like an irrelevant complaint, but it makes figuring out certain puzzles less intuitive.

In addition to their rapid-fire weapons, both characters have proximity mines, which are an integral method of controlling the onslaught of enemies the game regularly unleashes. Side by side, the combat and platforming/puzzle-solving make for a highly successful combination. There is no doubt that Lara and her dusty new friend will be responsible for one of the must-play games on PSN this summer.

The *Guardian Of Light* is being developed by Crystal Dynamics. For more info, check out the longest URL in the history of the universe: www.laracroftandtheguardianoflight.com

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

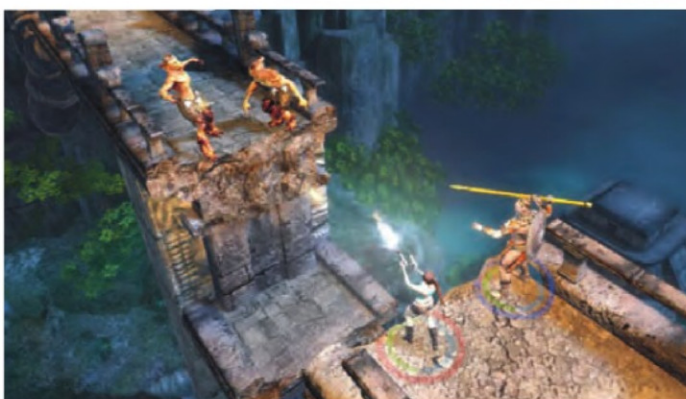
- Signature *Tomb Raider* action in classic arcade form.
- Top-shelf visuals stuffed into a downloadable game.
- Clever, co-op gameplay in online and offline modes.
- A fresh spin on the ageing *Tomb Raider* franchise.

READ ME

Despite the isometric viewpoint, Crystal Dynamics designed many of the game's areas vertically so you can see your destination before you reach it. Such a tease!



Are we really to believe that Totec just wants to be 'friends' after two millennia of not getting any?



FIRST LOOK



Let's hope they keep the co-op for the next proper *Tomb Raider* title.



Killing's more fun with a friend, even if he is 2,000 years old.



Please let there be an unlockable Union Jack bikini...

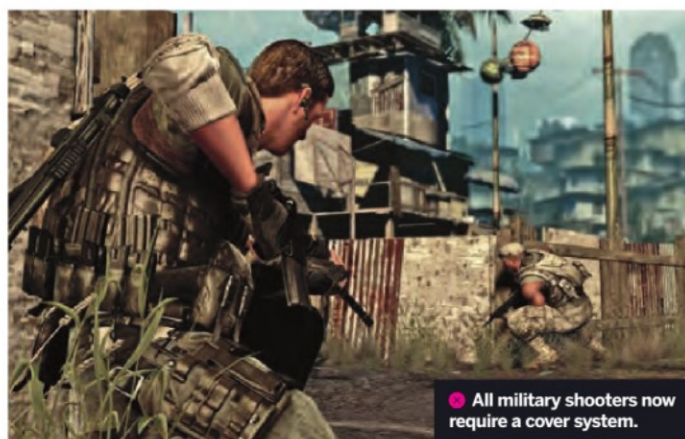
KILL 'EM ALL!

Want some carnage to go with your puzzles?

LARA AND TOTEC do plenty of killing in their off-time, which keeps up the pace of the game nicely. Lara has the usual suspects in her arsenal, as well as a new flame-thrower for melting down hordes of enemies. Totec stays true to his heritage by impaling enemies with spears, but also seems to be rather fond of the AK-47. Now all he needs is a cigar, sunglasses, and a cool catchphrase.

● Standing in the target zone of an air strike is not an ideal strategy.

FIRST LOOK



● All military shooters now require a cover system.



● Why doesn't anyone ever wear helmets in these games?

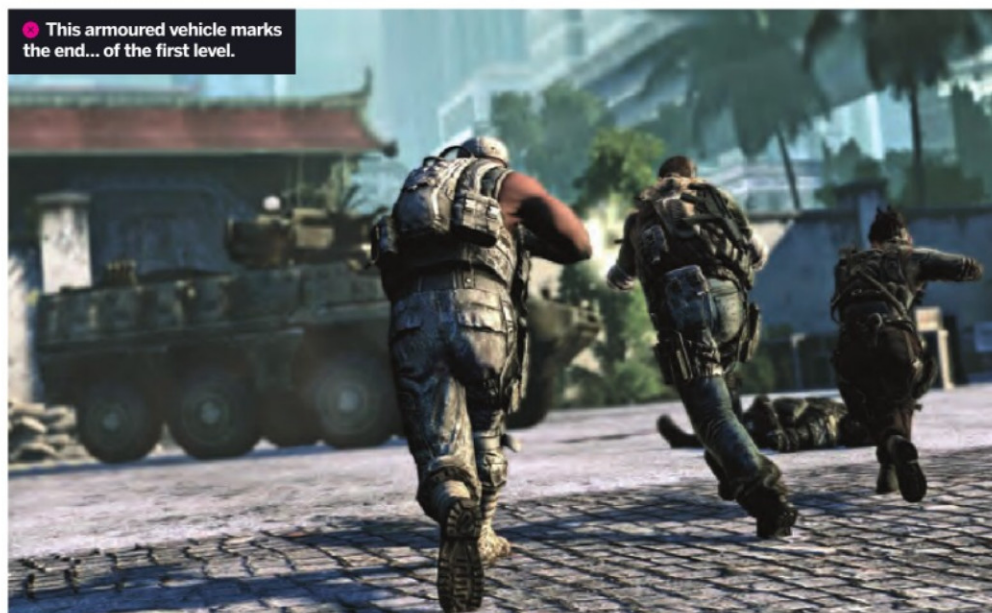
TAKE COMMAND

Less buttons, faster results

ALL TACTICAL DECISIONS are now handled through the new Command mode, including setting waypoints and issuing orders. This added simplicity is likely due to the inclusion of the Move, and although the game can be played fairly well with the motion controller, we can't imagine it being the popular choice in online modes where quick reflexes make the difference between waiting to respawn and tea-bagging randoms.



● This armoured vehicle marks the end... of the first level.



RELEASE DATE: TBC 2010

SOCOM 4

Zipper's done multiplayer, now its sights are set on single-player

Despite its embarrassing studio name, Zipper Interactive has been busy churning out blockbuster titles for Sony as of late: first with *MAG* and now with a return to the franchise that practically invented team-based, tactical shooters on the console. *SOCOM 4* is being developed as one of the major, Move-enabled launch titles for release later this year, and **Play** had a chance to play a newborn build of the game.

SOCOM 4 has been built from the ground up to be the pinnacle of tactical shooters (Zipper's words, not ours), and even with the PSThrii-mote in hand, is immediately more accessible than past iterations. For long-time, hardcore followers this may be akin to including hadoukens in *Virtua Fighter*, but that's not all Zipper is changing. To coincide with the 32-player competitive modes, there will be a much more finely tuned story campaign with which players can hone their skills. The plot centres around a five-man NATO special forces squad consisting of two Americans, two South Koreans and the player character, or 'Ops Commander'. Of the five new

characters, codename 45 stands out as the first female combatant in a *SOCOM* game. We didn't even realise there was a female on the team until we saw her crawling towards us begging to be revived; we were so in awe that we called in an air strike directly on top of her. Oops.

Zipper is putting a great deal of attention into creating an exciting, believable single-player experience. The motion-capture actors were recorded on a sound stage together to make their digital counterparts and interactions more natural, as Naughty Dog did with *Uncharted 2*. No actual cut-scenes have been shown off just yet, but the level we played was satisfyingly intense, ending with our character having to shove an explosive up an armoured vehicle's tailpipe and then run for cover. *SOCOM 4* still has a long way to go until it convinces us it can stand up against the Tom Clancys and *Modern Warfare*s, but it's at least off to a decent start. Expect loads more soon on Zipper's latest at E3.

SOCOM stands for US Special Operations Command and is being handled by Zipper Interactive. Enlist today at www.zipperint.com

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Aims to be the best single-player experience in a *SOCOM* yet.
- Better graphics than *SOCOM: Confrontation*, *MAG* and *Fat Princess*...
- Less convoluted tactical control scheme than previous *SOCOM* titles.
- Play with the Move or standard Sixaxis controller, or not at all.

READ ME

A more succinct, user-friendly *SOCOM* game with improved single-player. Multiplayer modes have yet to be revealed since Sony is focusing on the waggie.



● He may not be inconspicuous, but Majin will do as he's told for the most part.



RELEASE DATE: JULY

Majin: The Forsaken Kingdom

One man and his giant forest spirit

Of all the games simmering under the surface at the moment, Namco Bandai's *Majin: The Forsaken Kingdom* is easily one of the most eye-catching. With its mix of cute, inviting artwork and richly populated environments, it brings to mind the kind of work we might readily associate with Studio Ghibli, the animation studio. The premise of the game also holds something of a Ghibli feel as a young adventurer discovers the bulky creature known as Majin and finds himself embroiled in a fight with some shadowy types. We mean 'shadowy' quite literally by the way.

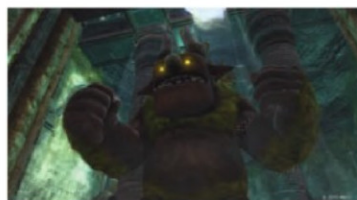
You and Majin must interact to fight off these dark fiends and solve puzzles throughout the game. In this respect you can also feel a great deal of Team Ico's work seeping into *Majin*. The companionship of an AI character, the mysterious threat of the shadow figures, the teaming up of large monster with slender hero. But this strikes us as a humble

referencing of games like *Ico* and *Shadow Of The Colossus* rather than any kind of rip-off. More than anything else *Majin* appears to be a much more proactive partner than we've seen from the Sony-published games thus far.

This mysterious monster is apparently suffering from amnesia when you meet him, but gradually regains his memories as the game progresses and with it some forgotten abilities that could be useful to you. Notable tricks such as being able to breathe fire and drink water so that it can be spat out somewhere else. That would indicate plenty of fire and water puzzles we guess. Ultimately the majority of the game would seem to require you to work closely with Majin, depending on him as he does you to get out of the hostile locale you've found yourself in. Should be a hoot.

Game Republic is the developer of *Majin: The Forsaken Kingdom*. Thankfully it has an English website at gamerepublic.jp/english/index

● These shadow creatures are very peculiar and should be hit hard with sticks.

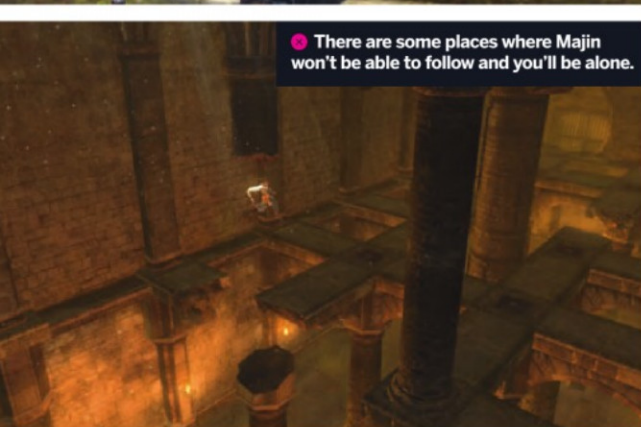


THE EVOLVING AI

Amnesia doesn't last forever

AS WE'VE DESCRIBED, Majin can't remember much when you meet him, but will become more aware as the game goes on. That means more tricks for him to use, but it also means he'll become more willful and mindful of his own needs and motivations. Game Republic has said that on several occasions you'll end up arguing with Majin about your course of action. Whether you'll have to play out these confrontations is yet to be revealed, but it sounds interesting.

● There are some places where Majin won't be able to follow and you'll be alone.



WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- It's like a Team Ico game, but made by the guys who made *Genji*.
- Majin is so cool that if he isn't made into a vinyl toy it would be a crime.
- It may seem familiar, but it's still completely different to most games these days.
- The art style and design really make *Majin* a game to keep an eye on.

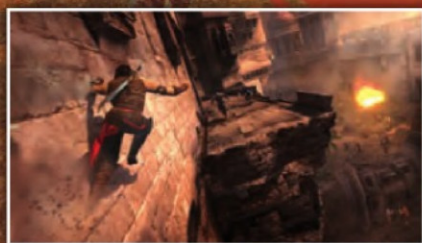
READ ME

Majin is being translated into a number of languages such as Portuguese and Spanish in order to break into new markets such as South America.

Prince of Persia

THE FORGOTTEN SANDS

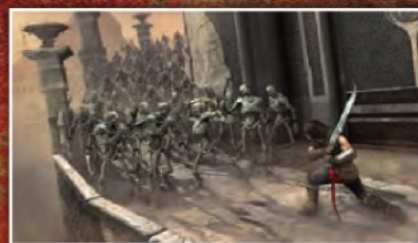
IN STORES 21ST MAY



Perform gravity defying acrobatic moves



Master the elements of nature and use them to manipulate the world



Fight in epic battles against terrifying hordes of enemies



UBISOFT



PS3



XBOX 360



PC DVD ROM

Wii

PSP

NINTENDO DS⁰

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PREVIEW

INTRODUCING...

SATURDAY KNIFE FEVER

He won't be stayin' alive



IN THE REAL world, dancing bears are thought of as cruel, but in this case it's what happens next that is an abuse of animal rights. Naughty Bear can turn off the power, halting the music. When boogie bear comes outside, Naughty Bear hides in the bushes then jumps out and shoves him head first into the high-voltage power box.

GET STUFFED

What a bunch of party animals



HERE WE SEE that Naughty Bear being left off the big birthday bash invite list was not a mere innocent oversight – the other bears hate him. We don't know why, but we suspect it's because he's a bit ripped and battered and they're all a bit snooty. We can sympathise but still, there's no excuse for serial murder.

TED BAKER

It's a whisk-y business



TEDDIES LIKE TO bake massive cakes using massive mixing bowls and massive whisks. It's all massively massive.

This is handy for Naughty Bear who can sneak into the bakery and throw the hapless baker bear into his own mix. Brings a new meaning to the term 'beat eggs until fluffy'.

RELEASE DATE: JUNE

Naughty Bear

We're going on a bear hunt

Three years ago, when the BBFC described a game as "...distinguishable from recent high-end videogames by its unrelenting bleakness and callousness of tone in an overall game context which constantly encourages visceral killing with exceptionally little alleviation or distancing. There is sustained and cumulative casual sadism in the way in which these killings are committed, and encouraged. The game's focus on stalking and slaying and the lack of alternative pleasures, together with the different overall narrative

context, contribute towards differentiating this submission..." it wasn't talking about *Naughty Bear*, it was talking about *Manhunt 2*. But you know what... the description kinda fits *Naughty Bear*, too.

All right, so it's less 'visceral' and more 'fluffy' but other than that, it's bang on. The story goes that Naughty Bear isn't invited to a birthday party and is so incensed that he goes on a rampage around his home, the Island Of Perfection, killing and mutilating all the other bears. That's not just naughty, it's sustained and cumulative casual sadism. Cool.

Naughty Bear has a similar sense of humour to PlayLogic's *Fairytale Fights* in that it mixes a traditional childhood setting – a sort of cross between *Rainbow* and *Care Bears* – with excessive, sadistic violence. Unlike *Fairytale Fights*, *Naughty Bear* doesn't have gallons upon gallons of blood, but that's because teddies don't bleed. It does have lots of cruel, torturous executions, though, all for no reason other than that the player-character didn't get a party invite. Oh, and that it's funny.

A2M is developing *Naughty Bear*. Check out the website for more details: www.a2m.com

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

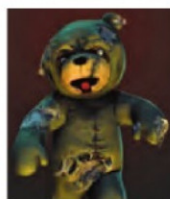
- ❑ Loads of different ways to terrorise the teddy bear community.
- ❑ An excuse for grown men to play with teddy bears.
- ❑ Like *Manhunt* but with cute and cuddly teddy bears.
- ❑ Sort of cute and adorable in a twisted sort of way.

READ ME

A disgruntled bear wreaks revenge on the idyllic society that has shunned him by going around causing brutal mayhem wherever he goes. Awww... bless.

DEAD-Y BEAR

Dawn of the ted



WHY THE ISLAND OF Perfection has zombie bears on it we don't know, but it does. They're much harder to kill than regular bears, so your best bet might be to unlock the zombie bear costume and use it to make them think you're one of them so they leave you alone.

INFERNO POOH

Look at Teddy searing 'em



NAUGHTY BEAR CARRIES a variety of bladed weapons, but only really as a last resort. He prefers where possible to use his victims' own property against them – it makes the taste of revenge that bit

sweeter. So if he finds a group of bears camping in the woods, he tries to throw them into their own campfire for maximum Naughty Points.

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PREVIEW



● Terry does appear to be jumping about 40 feet in the air here.

FIRST LOOK



● The Spaniards spanking the French. We don't quite know how to feel.



● The deformed physical style is to accentuate the physical aspects of the game, probably.

RELEASE DATE: MAY

Pure Football

A... new football game?!

Seeing a football game announcement usually brings forth the usual feelings of familiarity and a slight twinge of contempt. But every once in a while – though it's becoming increasingly rare – an actual new, *different* footy game makes itself known to the world. It's at these points that we sit up and take far more notice than we would of yet another FIFA or PES. So it was with the announcement of Ubisoft's *Pure Football* that we did indeed pay attention.

It doesn't look to be offering a direct challenge to EA's officially licensed FIFA World Cup game

Presented in a deformed, semi-cartoony style, the game doesn't look to be offering a direct challenge to EA's officially licensed FIFA World Cup game. Instead, *Pure Football* is promising to pay more attention to the physical and 'visceral' elements of the beautiful game – though that likely doesn't mean the Aaron Ramsey/Ryan Shawcross-style

of physicality. It may just sound like hyperbole, but the over-the-shoulder viewpoint of the game may well be able to bring – at the very least – a different feel to how the game actually plays. We're not sure if it'll really shake things up or just prove to be a gimmick, mind.

Backing up the attempts to shake up the genre, if only a little bit and by using ideas we've seen in the past, is the inclusion of 17 international teams, hundreds of real players and a few classic ball-kickers for good measure.

If this means we don't have to play as Rinaldo and Mossey then it's a good thing.

We have yet to play the game, but what we've

seen has piqued our interest. A title coming pretty much out of nowhere and releasing a few months later often isn't the best of signs, but we remain hopeful *Pure Football* can bring something new to a rather stale genre of sporting titles.

Pure Football is being developed by Ubisoft Vancouver. Check out www.ubi.com for more details.

● We have no idea if Messi will be a cheat character, like in FIFA.



STEVIE G

For when Lamps isn't available KEEPING UP THE tradition of footballers endorsing videogames, Ubisoft announced the involvement of Steven Gerrard with the promotion of *Pure Football*. Unfortunately, **Play** has an Everton fan on the staff and as such can't form statements based on honestly held opinions, based on fact. We just cannot risk the libel case to talk about the man.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

● A new football game is always very welcome.

● The interesting graphical style may interest some.

● It looks like *Pure Football* is going for the angle of 'fun'.

● Everyone loves Stevie G, right? No? Oh: no one loves him.

READ ME

Pure Football is the rarest of things: an alternative to FIFA and PES. As such, we welcome it with open arms.

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Requirements: Apple iPhone 3G, 3Gs, iPod Touch or iPad >> iPhone 3.1.2 or higher >> an Internet connection

REVIEWS

Playing bad games so you don't have to



Ian Dransfield

Reviewed: *Lost Planet 2*, *3D Dot Game Heroes*, *Dead Or Alive: Paradise*

Ian had many days off this month, during which he accomplished nothing. One thing he did manage to do this month, though, was buy the worst cookies anyone at **Play** has ever had. They had the texture of cement and the taste of plastic – truly horrible. Fortunately, he obtained some much better ones that his girlfriend baked. They were lovely.

currently playing: *Just Cause 2*

on review



76 **Split/Second: Velocity** PS3

Bleedin' wrecked 'em



82 **Skate 3** PS3

Flippin' board



84 **Dead To Rights: Retribution** PS3

Bloody gnawer

the rest

78 **ModNation Racers** PS3

80 **2010 FIFA World Cup South Africa** PS3

86 **Nier** PS3

87 **Patchwork Heroes** PSP

88 **3D Dot Game Heroes** PS3

89 **Dead Or Alive: Paradise** PSP

89 **What Did I Do To Deserve This, My Lord!? 2** PSP



**Gavin Mackenzie****Reviewed:** *Split/Second: Velocity*, 2010 FIFA World Cup South Africa

Gav recently had two new nicknames, Mr Douche and Uncle Gavin, vying for dominance. Uncle Gavin currently leads as, against all expectation, Gav is turning out to be a great uncle. His pram pushing and tummy tickling are exceptional. Gav also won a wrestling match this month. Against a girl. Maybe Uncle Gavin shall be his ring name.

currently playing: *Just Cause 2***Adam Barnes****Reviewed:** *What Did I Do To Deserve This, My Lord!? 2*

Adam had a haircut. Very nice it is, too. It cost £19. One member of **Play** genuinely doesn't know if that's a lot for a haircut these days or not. But anyway, Adam got his haircut prior to going to Birmingham. When we asked him if he'd be going to the Bullring, he said he didn't know you could get bullfights in this country. He wasn't even joking.

currently playing: *Split/Second: Velocity***Jonathan Gordon****Reviewed:** *Skate 3*, *ModNation Racers*

The news cave is a thing of the past. Jon has had it renovated and now it's a news condominium, which gets a lot more daylight and fresh air. There's even been talk of him writing two reviews this month. Yes, two in one month. All this playing games in the office has brought something worrying to our attention – Jon prefers to play as a female character. Yeah, you know the type...

currently playing: *Heavenly Sword*

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Lost Planet 2

PS3

Requirements for genuine enjoyment: three friends

**DETAILS**

Publisher
Capcom
Developer
In-house
Price
£39.99
Players
1-16
Genre
Action adventure
Supports
720p, PlayStation Network, Downloadable content, DualShock 3
Age Rating
16
Website
www.lostplanet2game.com

Ignore the original *Lost Planet*: you don't need to know anything much about it and you certainly don't need to have played it to have an idea of what's going on in this sequel. It was dated by the time it came out on PS3 and was a poor conversion of an Xbox 360 game that had been out for an age already. As such, we're more than happy to commit it to history as a decent, but ultimately forgettable action romp. Part of the reason we're so keen to cast the first game into the ether is because this second entry to the series – cunningly entitled *Lost Planet 2* – makes the original null and void. This isn't to say it's an instant classic, but it does mix things up sufficiently to render *Extreme Condition* down to a footnote in the annals of PS3's history.

Set on the same planet as the original game, *LP2*'s E.D.N. III has seen a massive change in climate, turning many parts of the world into tropical jungle settings, deserts and other normal types of terrain you would come to expect from somewhere like Earth. The story is... forgettable... and follows

a number of different bands of soldiers fighting the alien Akrid and each other for whatever reason they want to: more thermal energy (the power source of everything that makes a return from the first game); simply because they're bandits; to save the world; or whatever else. Some surprisingly competent voice acting goes hand in hand with action-packed cut-scenes, but this isn't a game with anything really coherent to say. This is probably down to the structure of *Lost Planet 2* more than anything: bitty

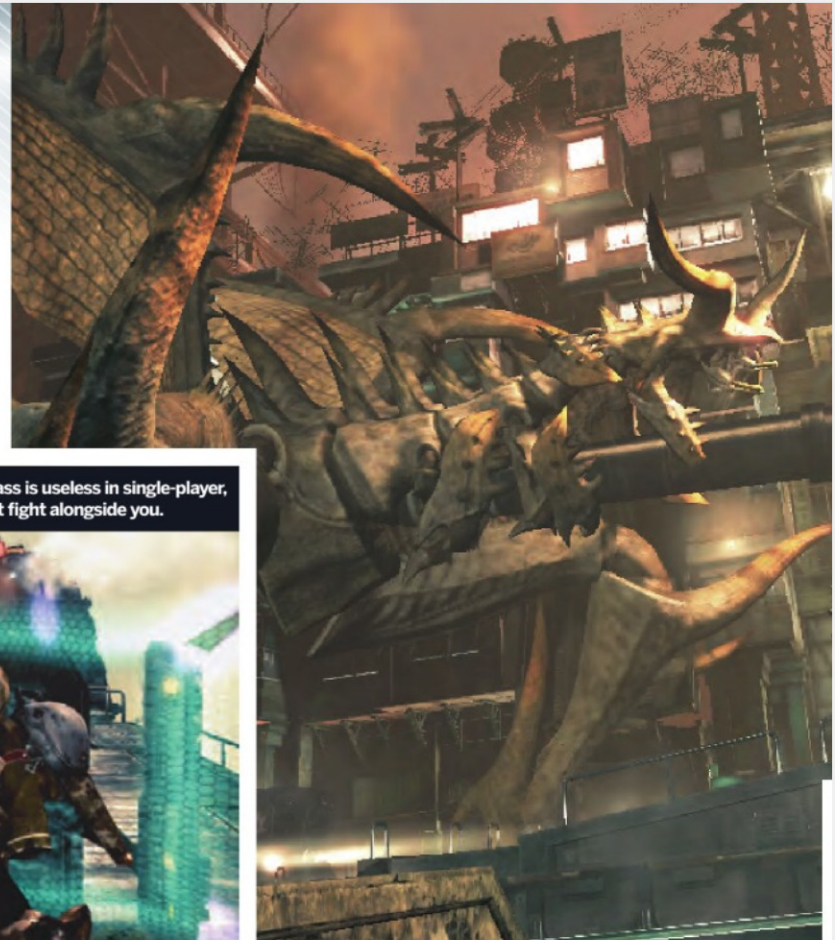
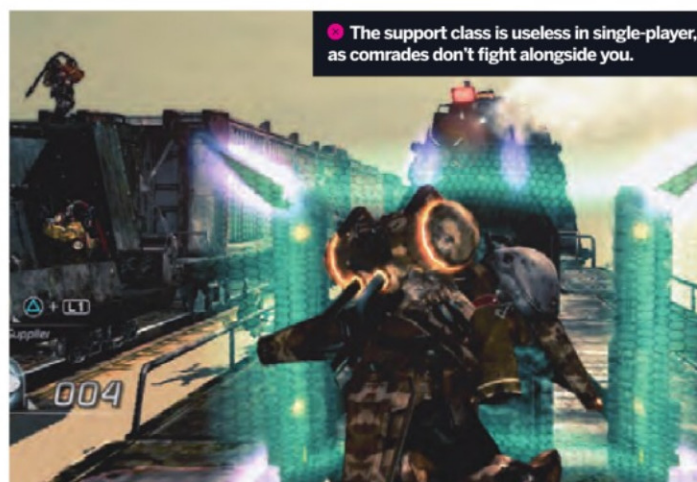
Lost Planet 2 is not a game that was made purely with single-player in mind

missions with identikit objectives of 'kill everything', 'survive' or 'activate command posts' are played out almost as instances akin to *Left 4 Dead* and rarely take more than 15 minutes to finish. As such, it is clearly a game made for multiple playthroughs of chapters and is one you will rotate the order in which you play it. Therefore, story takes a back seat and can be largely ignored.

The game plays like a sped-up version of the original: a third-person shooter with

START

Use Harm



some odd control decisions (R3 to reload, R2 or L2 to quick turn, for example). If you've played any other recent shooter you will hit the ground running with *LP2*. And then you will be killed. Repeatedly. For this is, in fine Capcom tradition, an absolutely unforgiving experience. For all you are encouraged to use the massive weapons, which don't slow movement by much; for all the numerous robotic Vital Suits littering the battlefield, some of which can be operated by multiple players at once; for all of the replayability, the ranking system and the endless stream of Noms de Guerre's handed out by the game, *Lost Planet 2* can be an absolute bummer when it comes to difficulty. But this is an element that will appeal to a lot of gamers, so it's not one we're criticising.

Episodes seem to be divided between taking on swathes of enemies – both human and insect-like Akrid – in battles of impressive scale, and brutal encounters with some gigantic boss creatures. It is the latter area in which *Lost Planet 2* shines, with some of the massive enemies taking real thinking to take down (though, really, you just aim for the glowing bits). Taking cues from *Monster Hunter*, it is only by working together that you

can bring these beggars down – and that's a reason the game falters when you're playing it alone. Even so, it's still a perfectly functional and exciting system, and provides some fine and – just like the last game – decidedly old-school shootery fun.

Massive, spectacular boss battles and a plethora of collectables isn't a combination that makes *Lost Planet 2* immune to criticism, however. We wish they did, but they really don't, and the game suffers for some basic issues that could easily have been fixed between the first and second games. A lot of these problems can be quite fairly written off as down to the high difficulty level of *Lost Planet 2*, but some elements just strike us as poor – or ridiculously unfair – game design. Constantly being blindsided by enemy attacks isn't something we'd describe as fun, and the amount of times we were knocked onto our backside and were – while going through the throes of the rolling then getting up animations – continually being shot at bordered on silly. One other area we took major issue with is the grappling hook.

Constantly being blindsided by enemy attacks isn't something we would describe as fun

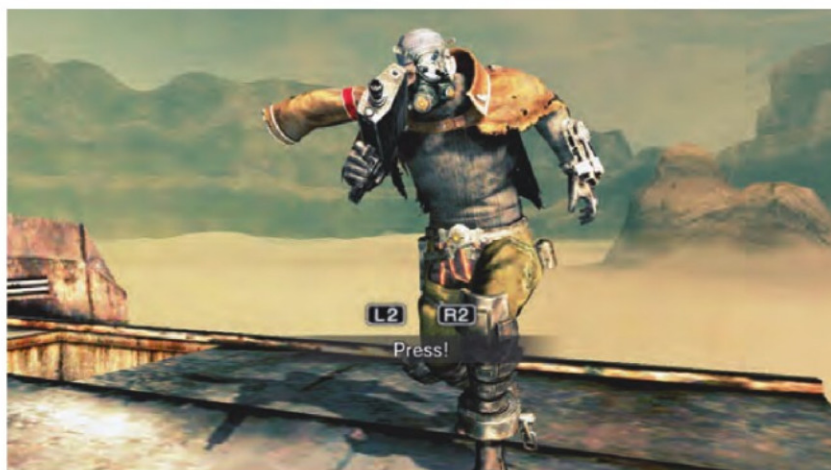
Now, it works fine a lot of the time – if you come into *LP2* from *Just Cause 2* you'll be confused, at least for a while, but generally it's acceptable. However, it is broken in that as soon as any part of your body comes into contact with anything in the game, you will drop where you currently are in midair. Normally: no problem. Levels where there is a fatal drop, with the train levels in particular highlighting this issue, are not so lacking in the problem department. The grappling hook can, therefore, cause dozens of pointless, avoidable deaths – the worst kind to inflict on the player in an already-difficult game. It may seem like we're being picky, but it is an issue many of our gaming contemporaries agreed with us on: the grappling hook is broken. The less said about the requirement for exacting movement on a few levels, when it's pretty clear your characters and Vital Suits aren't the nimblest of protagonists, the better.

The major problem from a single-player standpoint, however, is the bewilderingly poor AI. While enemy intelligence is generally okay, they do sometimes have a habit of standing still and just not doing anything until you shoot at them from point-blank range, even on the harder difficulties. But the real problem is with friendly AI, which is easily on a par with the IQ of a glass of stagnant water. Friendlies will spend minutes on end running around empty areas of a level, doing nothing and not being anywhere near a battle – and you have no command over them. When they do decide to get involved, they'll shift between lethal efficiency – taking down the biggest enemies before you have a chance to get a shot off – and complete ineffectiveness – usually just standing *directly in your line of fire*, then

CUTIE

Or is it: 'quick, time-event'?

LOST PLANET 2 does indeed contain quick-time events, but don't let that make you think it's why we're slightly underwhelmed. No, these QTEs pop up rarely on an individual basis, but frequently throughout the game. Confused? Well, a single-button press will be required from one of the four players in the team on certain cut-scenes – usually at the end of an episode. This isn't always the player character in one-player mode and as such it comes across as though you have sporadic QTEs popping up for no apparent reason every now and then. It's another area that, frankly, just doesn't work in single-player mode.



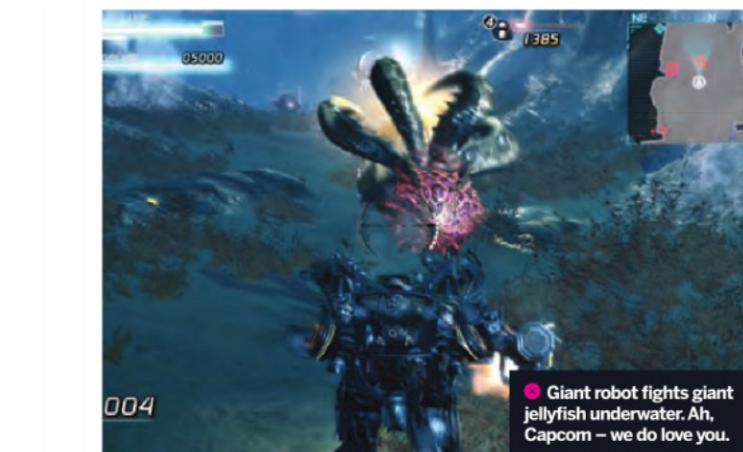
In this series



Lost Planet: Extreme Condition Issue 163
A fun, rugged shooter let down by a shoddy conversion from Xbox 360. 69%



● "If he's humping the cannon, use the cannon."



● Giant robot fights giant jellyfish underwater. Ah, Capcom – we do love you.

NAMES OF WAR

The game awards them to you, so what did we get?

LOST PLANET 2 is home to hundreds of Noms de Guerre – like the name tags from *Street Fighter IV*, these reflect your playing style or achievements in-game. But how do the Play team stack up? Let's have a look:



KEITH
'SNOWBALL'
HENNESSEY



GAVIN 'HARDCORE
TO THE MAX'
MACKENZIE



JON
'SHOTGUN
NOVICE' GORDON



IAN 'SHOULD
BE WORKING'
DRANSFIELD



ALISON
'RIFLE MANIAC'
INNES



DAN
'UNDERDOG'
PEEL



● This guy is a proper boss. He's also quite big.

complaining when you have the audacity to shoot them. *Lost Planet 2* is not a game that was made purely with single-player in mind. If it were, this would be the death knell for it. The focus is on co-op, however, which saves the game from falling into a spiral of despairing cack. We cannot completely let it off, though, as a basic, functional level of team AI is absolutely necessary in the game, and just like in *Resident Evil 5* it just doesn't exist – at least not to a good enough level.

But let's drag this back into the realms of what we do enjoy, as even though *Lost Planet 2* in single-player made us chew up entire sections of the inside of our mouths through pure, unadulterated frustrated fury, the game is fun. It's well made, boss battles are suitably epic and generally speaking it's the right direction for the series to go in. Some are

sure to lament the loss of a more story-driven experience and those without the ability to play the game with friends are missing out on most of what makes the game fun in the first place, but it is still decent to play alone. Infuriating, broken in parts and testament to the fact Capcom really needs to get its act together when it comes to partner AI – but decent nonetheless.

Ian Dransfield

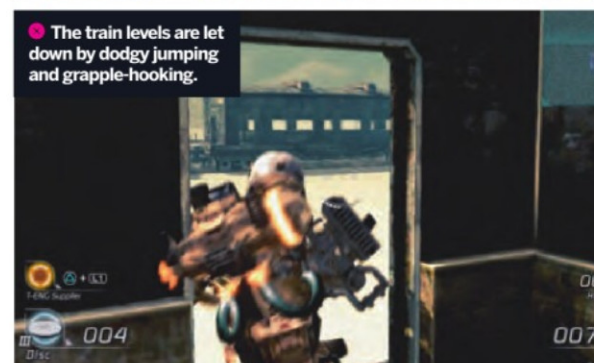
VERDICT

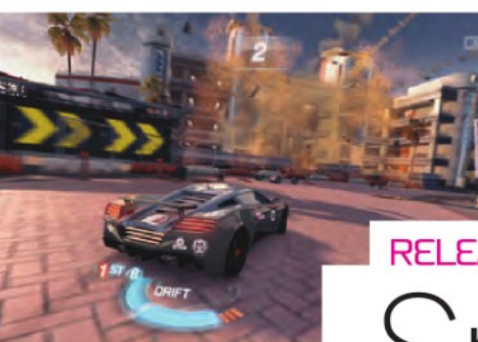
LP2 is better than the original, but it has many failings of its own. In single-player it can become a slog to battle through, with questionable AI and design choices. Don't buy it unless you have friends to play with.

75%



● The train levels are let down by dodgy jumping and grapple-hooking.





DETAILS

Publisher
Disney Interactive

Developer
Black Rock Studio

Price
£49.99

Players
1-8

Genre
Racing

Supports
720p, PlayStation

Network,

Downloadable content,

DualShock 3, Dolby

Digital 5.1

Age Rating
7

Website
www2.disney.co.uk/

split-second-velocity/

RELEASE DATE: 21 MAY

Split/Second: Velocity

Check yourself before you wreck yourself

Black Rock Studio must be sick of hearing about the *Burnout* series. Tough. We're not done comparing *Split/Second* to *Burnout* yet, so belt up. *Burnout Paradise* has to be one of the most divisive games of this generation. It was a critical and commercial success no doubt, but not everyone appreciated the new, open-world direction Criterion took the series in. *Play's* was one of few dissenting voices among critics, whose reviews averaged 87% on Metacritic, but the much lower Metacritic user score of 74% would strongly suggest



that we were far from the only long-time *Burnout* fans who felt they'd been abandoned by the side of the road while everyone else drove around checking their map and going slowly in case they missed a turn. We were heartbroken and we needed a new eyeball-bleedingly fast arcade racer in our lives. When Disney Interactive announced *Split/Second* in March 2009 we dared to believe that perhaps our prayers had been answered. A little over a year later, the finished product has arrived and the question of whether this is the game we've been waiting for since *Burnout* took a wrong turn can finally be answered. And it can be answered with a... yes.

Play's review of *Burnout 3: Takedown* – the best in the series and, while we're at it, still the best arcade racing game of all time – called it “one of those rare ‘think and you will crash’ titles that will remind you why you decided to play games in the first place” and this very same statement is just as true of *Split/Second*. We don't care how sick the guys at Black Rock are of the *Burnout*

comparisons, they should be honoured by this one. Everyone has their own reasons for playing games, but one of our main ones is that we can only think of one other form of home entertainment so engaging and so exciting that you literally end up bouncing up and down on the sofa red-faced, out of breath and giggling, and *that*, unlike games, can't be bought (erm... not legally anyway). Honestly, though, that's the effect *Split/Second: Velocity* had on us. It's that exciting, that exhilarating and that much fun.

How's it so much fun? Well, that quote from our *Burnout 3* review can help us out here, too. It's fun because Black Rock understands perfectly the concept of ‘think and you will crash’. Just in case you don't, we'd better explain it. *Split/Second*, like *Burnout 3*, is a racing game so fast and so action-packed that in order to play it properly you have to let conscious thought processes take a back seat, putting faith in your reflexes and riding on a wave of adrenaline. Thinking is just too slow for a game like this. Trying to do it will

DRIVING BEATS

Thank you, Black Rock, for the music

SPLIT/SECOND HAS WHAT fans of jargon like to call a dynamic soundtrack, which is to say that the in-game music adapts and reacts to what you're doing. But this isn't just any dynamic soundtrack, it's the best dynamic soundtrack we've ever heard in a game.

Instead of some licensed pop-punk tune blaring away pointlessly in the background, you get anthemic, action movie-style music with hard bass beats that fit the tone of the game perfectly. But it's not really the music itself that's so impressive, it's the way

it's woven together with the sound effects, the visuals and the action itself. We would try to explain how it works but it's too clever for us. Somehow, though, thanks to a variety of techniques the music feels as integral to the game as any other part of it.



● In Air Strike mode you have to avoid waves of missiles shot at you by a helicopter. In Air Revenge mode, you can deflect them back.



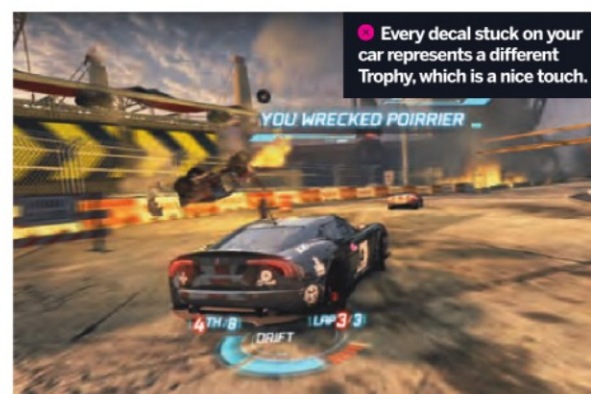
● Survival mode sees you trying to overtake trucks as they drop exploding barrels into your path.

Split/Second: Velocity

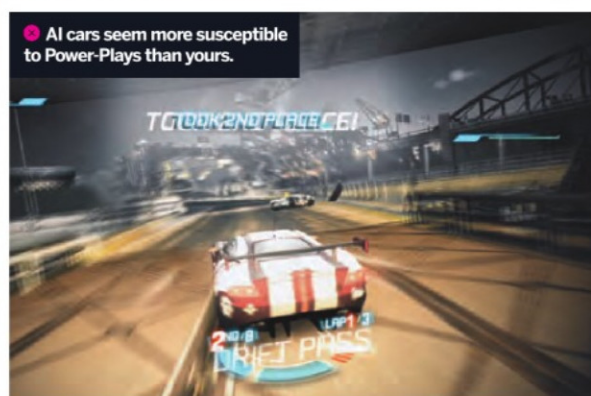
● There's no radar to help you navigate around the track because someone blew up the dish.



● Power-Plays cause shockwaves that send you sliding across the track even if you're not caught directly in the blast.



● Every decal stuck on your car represents a different Trophy, which is a nice touch.



● AI cars seem more susceptible to Power-Plays than yours.

delay your reactions and make you more likely to crash. So you don't think, you just *do*. Surrendering control to your instincts like this is something of an intoxicating rush in itself, but there's more to it than that.

The *Burnout* games (no, we're not going to leave them out of it, ever) are often thought of as games that, fundamentally, are about crashing cars. But if you think about it, the opposite is true. The best *Burnout* moments are the moments where you *don't* crash. You should have crashed. You've no idea how you didn't. But somehow you came through unscathed. Yes, it's all about the near misses and the close calls; those moments where disaster is averted by a hair's breadth or, if you will, a split second.

In *Split/Second: Velocity*, Black Rock has turned the idea of almost (but not quite)

In *Split/Second*, Black Rock has turned the idea of almost (but not quite) crashing a car into an art form

crashing a car into an art form. For a start, the game's premise – that racers try to make each other crash by triggering 'disasters' – means that you won't just narrowly miss other cars. You might just about avoid a jumbo jet making an emergency landing in one race, then escape in the nick of time when a huge power plant chimney starts crashing down around you in the next. Many of these Power-Plays would be pretty exciting just to watch, but

Split/Second has you driving *through* them at 200mph. It's a *helluva* rush.

And great effort has been made to ensure that every near miss and every Power-Play really punctuates the action. *Split/Second* blends together a huge variety of effects – some subtle, some excessive – resulting in an experience that has an almost spooky

capacity to take your senses to the point of overload, but never quite past it. This careful, deliberate, 'excitement by design' approach was what we felt was sorely missing from *Burnout*, and what we hoped we would get from *Split/Second*. To be honest, though, we weren't expecting Black Rock to nail it quite *this* well. It's perhaps not quite the polished, finely honed masterpiece *Burnout 3* was, but it has earned the title of 'spiritual successor' to that true classic of a game, and that is still very high praise indeed.

Gavin Mackenzie

VERDICT

A game so good at getting under your skin and poking you in the adrenaline glands, that it's a bit worrying. Made us punch the air and shout 'YES!' on more than one occasion, and we're not embarrassed to admit it.

90%



RELEASE DATE: 21 MAY

ModNation Racers

Creativity is key, but there's plenty more besides



DETAILS

Publisher
Sony
Developer
United Front Games
Price
£49.99
Players
1-4 (2-12 Online)
Genre
Racing
Supports
720p, PlayStation Network, Downloadable content, DualShock 3, Dolby Digital 5.1
Age Rating
7
Website
www.modnation.com

As a brand to sell games on, Play, Create, Share always felt a little hollow with only *LittleBigPlanet* to pin it on. Now Sony has *ModNation Racers* to add to this new genre it's trying to pioneer; a genre that holds all the promise of this generation in terms of player interactivity and community building. After bursting onto the scene in some style last summer during the games conventions and then impressing many with an open beta test earlier in the year, it's fair to say much of the promise that Play, Create, Share suggested seems to have been fulfilled by *ModNation Racers*.

This is a game all about creativity and allowing you as a gamer to become an artist in this world. The tools, interface and materials are all there to make your game as individual to you as you can. We attempted to squeeze everything we could out of the beta test a few months back and couldn't find its breaking point. Now, with the fully unlocked game in front of us, we're not sure it has one. *ModNation Racers* is seemingly limitless in terms of the options available to you.

The most important part of this is the track creation system. At its base and most intuitive level you can create some really entertaining



and vibrant tracks in a matter of minutes. Spend a little more time with the system and perhaps even venture into the expert editing tools and things get even more spectacular. Once you start playing around with open sections of track, spirals, giant jumps with hoops, shortcuts, trick turnings, boost pad placement and all the rest, you could very easily forget there's supposed to be a racing game on the disc somewhere. You'll be having that much fun just tweaking and editing your creations that you could spend hours at a time just doing that.

But there is a racing game here and, even more so than with *LittleBigPlanet*, it had to be right. *LBP* could almost get away with not being

the best platform game in the world because the creativity of the community and their ability to tell fun and interesting stories made up for that. As a karting game there's no scope for forgiveness for *ModNation Racers* in that way. Thank goodness then that United Front

Some of the best edge-of-your-seat multiplayer gaming we've had in ages



has pulled off what so many seem to find so difficult in making a truly addictive, infectious and delightfully frustrating karting game.

Because, let's face it, karting games are supposed to be frustrating at times. Unlike most others *ModNation* does owe a lot more to skill than kart selection (although you can alter the balance between speed/acceleration and handling/drift to match your style), but skill alone is not enough to win a race when you've got such well-balanced weapons on the track. Mastering the use of your arsenal as well as the best use of the drift to earn boost power is essential. Each weapon has three levels of attack for each pod you collect, increasing in power and in spread to affect more karts. Likewise you can use your boost power – from



Drifting is a very important part of *ModNation Racers* and must be mastered.



Using shields to protect yourself is essential if you're leading the race.



Your Mod will appear in cut-scenes in career mode even if you change them.

getting airtime, drafting and drifting – for more than just added speed. It can also act as a shield for a short period or allow you to barge karts out of your way with a flick of the stick. It all adds up to some of the best edge-of-your-seat multiplayer gaming we've had in ages.

Playing locally with up to four-player split-screen the need to learn the track and time the use of your abilities wisely is apparent and even playing solo through career mode offers a significant challenge at times. You should breeze through the early races, but with three tiers of race targets for each track, each unlocking different content for the Creation Station, plus tokens to collect that you can also spend on content, there's plenty to go chasing after alongside the chequered flag. The tracks offered by United Front on the disc are also very inventive and challenging in themselves, offering plenty of pointers towards the kinds of things you could be thinking about doing with your circuits.

Like *LittleBigPlanet* it is not a game without its faults, though. Load times on the code we

played seemed rather long (although the tips it gives you while you wait can be quite handy), the frame rate wasn't always brilliant and the rubber banding of races seemed rather blatant at times. But while these were annoying, they didn't make the creation tools any less fun to use and they didn't stop the racing from being the best kart gameplay on the PS3. With *ModNation Racers*, Sony has struck creative gold again. All that remains now is for the community to grow much as it did with *LBP* so that the Play, Create, Share promise of this game can be fulfilled.

Jon Gordon

VERDICT

Even as a karting game *ModNation Racers* puts the likes *Sonic* to shame, but add the immense levels of creativity and this is a class apart. It has some technical issues, but once the community comes it should make a worthy partner to Sackboy's adventures.

90%

BRICK TRICKS

The Lego influence on ModNation

THE SINGLE-PLAYER career mode is a mixed bag when it comes to the story (written by Hollywood writers apparently), but it's at its best when it draws on the example set by the Lego games. The *Star Wars* and *Indiana Jones* games may not have been perfect, but their combination of slapstick comedy and animation in the

cut-scenes often made up for that. *ModNation Racers* has the gameplay, so at first these cut-scenes struck us as a little forced, but once the humour came out it began to come together. The imagery, movement and personalities of *ModNation Racers* reflects the tone of the game as a whole; irreverent, fun and all about you as the star.



We unlocked this jet engine by spending credits in the shop, not that it makes us any faster.



PS3

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

2010 FIFA World Cup South Africa



DETAILS

Publisher EA
Developer EA Canada
Price £49.99
Players 1-20
Genre Sports
Supports 720p, PlayStation Network, Downloadable content, DualShock 3, Dolby Digital 5.1
Age Rating 3
Website <http://fifa-world-cup-easports.com/>

The biggest price... sorry, *prize* in football

It was inevitable that there was going to be an official World Cup football game this year, and it was inevitable that we were going to mark it down for being just like *FIFA 10* only considerably less so. It's not that we dislike the idea of having a tournament-specific footy title, it's just that we don't see any justification for making it full price. If *Super Street Fighter IV* can retail at £29.99, then so should this. But it doesn't.

However, if you are willing to set value-for-money issues aside, *FIFA World Cup 2010* is a very good game and, in pure gameplay terms, does represent a slight improvement on *FIFA 10*. As always with football games, it's difficult to pinpoint *exactly* what's different, but it does feel noticeably tighter and more controlled. Players seem far less prone to tripping over each other while the ball scoots off in a random direction than in *FIFA 10*, which is a definite plus. But perhaps as a by-product of this improvement, some animations feel just a little bit more scripted.

Overall, though, we felt more in control despite the fact that our players' responses were sometimes a little slower than before.

The other main difference between this and *FIFA 10* is, of course, its presentation, which is excellent, it has to be said. The atmosphere, the magic and, if you'll permit us to be wistful, the magic of a World Cup competition has been captured very well. If you're planning to play it alongside the real World Cup finals then you'll find it really *fits* and feels like a natural extension of the World Cup experience.

The World Cup mode is full of details that feed into the overall vibe. We particularly liked the way the media reporting of the event has been re-created. Between games you get mini news reports about your matches and others, and they never feel as formulaic as you might expect. Then there's the commentary. Andy Townsend and Clive Tyldesley might

not be a popular choice, but it's possible to forgive a lot when the commentary has been integrated into the game as well as it has here. Yeah, they'll still occasionally refer to a routine catch as a spectacular save and a five-yard offside as 'close', but EA has done a great job of tailoring what they say to each individual match according to its context in the overall tournament, especially when you play as England. We couldn't help feeling as

Really makes you feel part of a high-stakes overarching story

though they'd cursed us when we reached the quarter finals as England when they did the inevitable 'they've played very well to get here, but this is the stage where they always lose their cool and muck it up' speech. Sure enough, we shot into a 2-0 first-half lead against France. But we entered the second half with Townsend and Tyldesley's doom-

SPOT CHECK

More reasons to fear a penalty shoot-out

IF YOU'RE GOING to play as England, which you are, then you're going to need to get the hang of penalties, unless of course you're taking the role-playing thing very seriously, in which case we suggest not practising them at all prior to starting a tournament. This is one thing that is

not the same as *FIFA 10*. There's now a Composure meter and an invisible aim indicator and the option to stutter your run-up. We failed to score either of the two penalties we were awarded during our time with the game, sending both very high and wide with no real idea of why.



Looks like Spain's #6 has a nosebleed and watery eyes coming up.





● We thought it was the most realistic football game ever 'til this happened.



● LOL, LMAO and OMG were all disappointed not to be called up to the German squad.



● Every team's fans look much the same but with different colour schemes.



laden prophecies ringing in our ears and, sure enough, caved to the pressure, losing 3-2. Oh well, at least it wasn't penalties.

Bitter though we might be about the commentators' role in our sudden downturn in form, we have to admit that the feeling of tension and pressure they help to generate is one of *FIFA World Cup 2010*'s strong points. The news reports and detailed commentary combine to really make you feel part of a high-stakes overarching story that's much more than just a series of games, and that's something you won't really get in *FIFA 10*. The only downside to the richness and detail of the commentary is that it sounds like it's had to be compressed a bit too much. We noticed distortion here and there, especially on 's' sounds, but it's not bad enough that you'd notice it on ordinary TV speakers.

Another interesting touch is that EA Canada has decided to factor in altitude, meaning that when you play at a high-altitude venue, your team will tire more quickly. We found this especially noticeable when playing as Nigeria, whose high-speed attacking style requires and expends a lot of

energy at the best of times. We were a serious threat in every first half, but knackered, sluggish and totally ineffective after half time in every match. There's probably some tactical way around that problem, but we never figured it out.

So yeah, it's a really good World Cup game, but it is just a World Cup game and ultimately little more than *FIFA 10* with far fewer teams and players. Every international team (just shy of 200 in all) and pretty much every eligible player to have ever been called up is included, though, so it's not *that* slim a package, but it still seems a bit much to be asking £50 for a game that will seem largely redundant come mid-July.

Gavin Mackenzie

VERDICT

Excellent gameplay and presentation can't make up for the fact that the package isn't substantial enough to justify the asking price. You'd have to be *really* into the World Cup not to feel a little short-changed.

70%



RELEASE DATE: 28 MAY

Skate 3

Still fun, still challenging, still not changing much



DETAILS

Publisher EA
Developer Black Box
Price £49.99
Players 1-3
Genre Sports
Supports 720p, PlayStation Network, Downloadable content, DualShock 3, Dolby Digital 5.1
Age Rating 16
Website skate.ea.com

When you've hit on a formula through luck or skill the way that Black Box did with *Skate* it's hard to break too far from the original idea for fear of breaking the whole. Because of this, if you were to take a quick dip into *Skate* or *Skate 3* you could be found wondering what exactly has changed. The answer in terms of core gameplay is virtually nothing, but in terms of presentation, structure and accessibility *Skate 3* is well ahead.

The biggest change really is that *Skate 3* actually has some time for people who don't immediately understand its control system. *Skate* and *Skate 2* were unforgiving at times, but with three difficulty settings and the option to either Own or Kill a challenge this third outing gives players much more leeway. It also puts the level of challenge you face more firmly in your hands, but that doesn't mean there aren't still some really tricky tasks to complete. We still found ourselves having to quit out of a couple of events because we just couldn't crack them and we consider ourselves pretty familiar with the game.

It doesn't help that as you warp around the world, which is the most obvious and quickest way of accessing challenges, it's difficult to judge how hard a task is going to be. Our recommendation is to read the synopsis and then teleport, but don't sign up immediately to the event. That way you can have a look around and judge for yourself if what's being asked of you seems plausible.

Skate 3 is simultaneously cool and completely un-bothered by what you think of it

chances instead of five, though, it makes the game quicker and easier to win.

This mode is also available for team play, which is the biggest new feature in *Skate 3*. The whole structure of the game revolves around you building a skateboarding brand and attracting skaters to a team. This may strike you as a tacked-on idea, a change for the

sake of change and admittedly it sometimes felt that way as we played it. Doing a Death Race with an AI partner in which his or her result will affect whether or not you win could be very annoying, but two things save *Skate 3* from falling into this trap. First, the AI pretty much matches you as you go through the game. We only rarely encountered a situation where our partners held us back or caused us to lose. All you have to worry about is your own performance. And second, this is all supposed to lead you towards the multiplayer.

As we've said before, multiplayer team play was something the online community was doing on its own in the previous games, but *Skate 3* gives it its full endorsement. All the team elements of this game make so much more sense when you remember you could and should be using them to play with friends online. You should be going on the *Skate* website to design your team logo and checking up on your team's progress. This only draws attention to how hollow this sometimes feels in single-player, but since these features were not introduced at the expense of any modes from the old games it's hard to be upset about it.

The attitude and tone of *Skate* is what makes it so easy to love. It is simultaneously cool and completely un-bothered by what you think of it. *Skate 3* has no ego. It has established itself as the premier skating franchise on the market today, but you won't be hearing EA or Black Box beating their drums about it. They even managed to get *My Name Is Earl* star Jason Lee to play a skateboarding coach in the game to teach newcomers the game's basics and they didn't make a fuss. Despite its dedication to realism it constantly makes reference to the fact that it's a game and keeps its tongue firmly in its cheek.



In this series



Skate 2 Issue 175
 An improvement on the original, but only a marginal one. **82%**

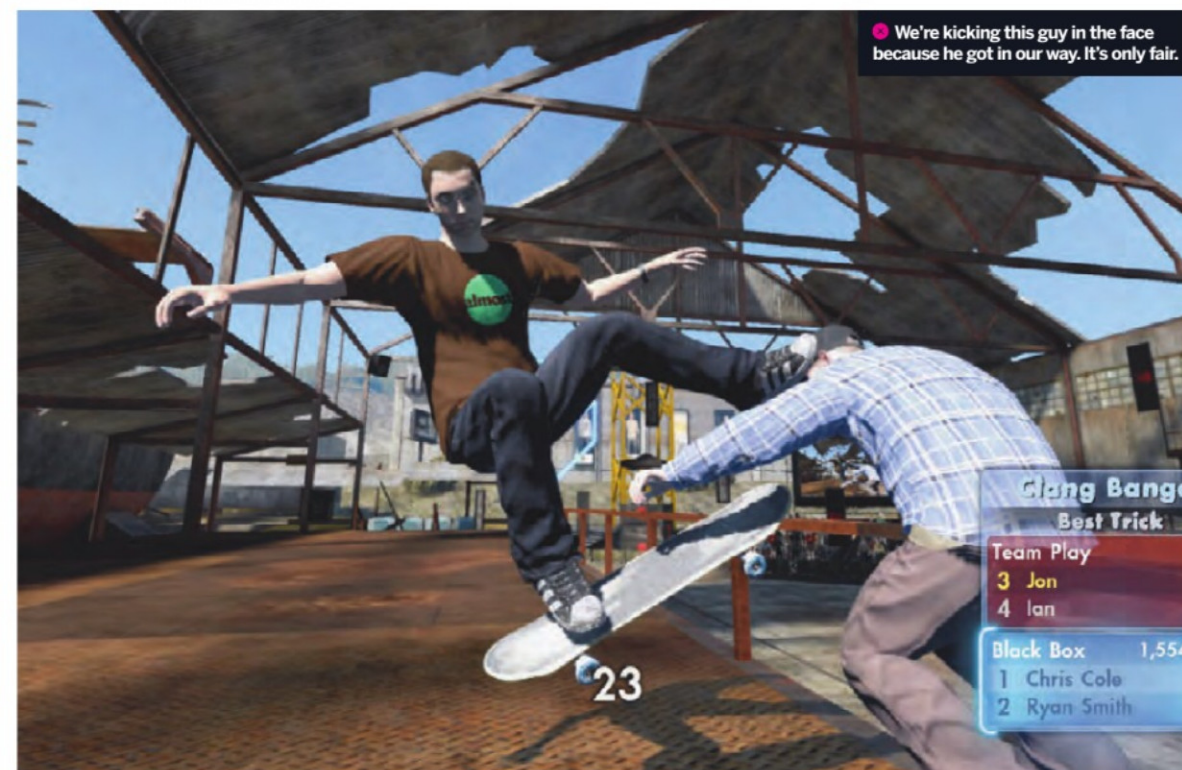


A TALE OF TWO CITIES

The simple brilliance of Port Calverton

SAN VANELONA, THE home of the first two *Skate* games was pretty fun. It brought together parts of Barcelona, San Francisco and Vancouver and offered plenty of exciting things to do. Sadly, it was also a real pain in the backside. Its security guards, pedestrians and speeding cars were all very frustrating. No such

worries in Port Calverton. The only security guards we met were pointing us in the direction of things to skate, we could hit pedestrians with our skateboard and everything was sunny and lovely. We could even build our own skate park from scratch if we wanted to. Consider this a significant improvement.



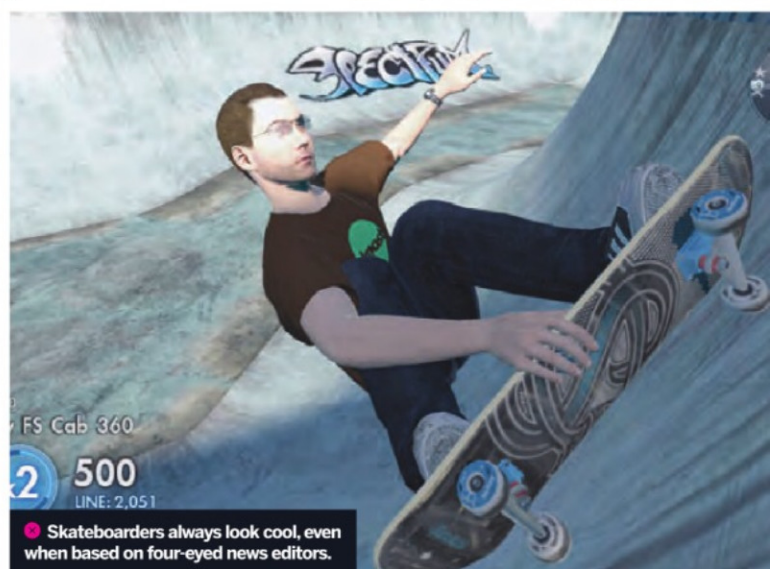
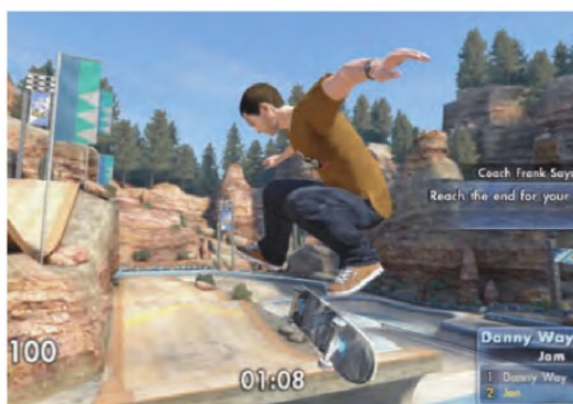
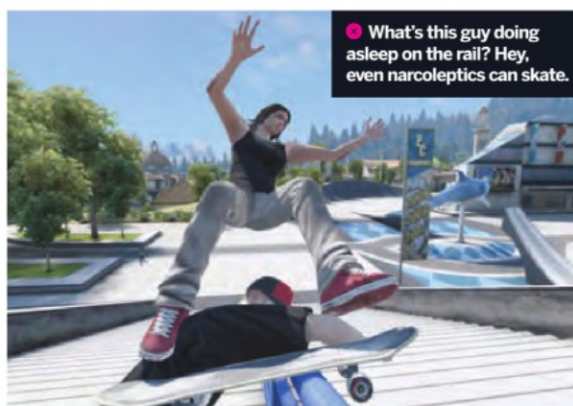
Which brings us to the best game mode *Skate 3* has to offer and one that could be worth the price alone. The Hall Of Meat mode was one of the highlights of the last game as you flung your skater around and attempted to cause as much injury to them as possible. *Skate 3* enjoys Hall Of Meat 2.0. Injuries are visible immediately as your skeleton becomes visible and your midair moves can be used to glide around as you fall. It makes the whole process a bit more ridiculous and therefore more fun. It's a sense of fun that does feel like it's beginning to spread through more of the game, but it could still prove impenetrable to some.

Jon Gordon

VERDICT

Skate 3 is simply the best in the series and as such the best skateboarding game available on PS3. It still doesn't take the series on much from previous games, but its sense of fun and superb control mechanics are still without equal.

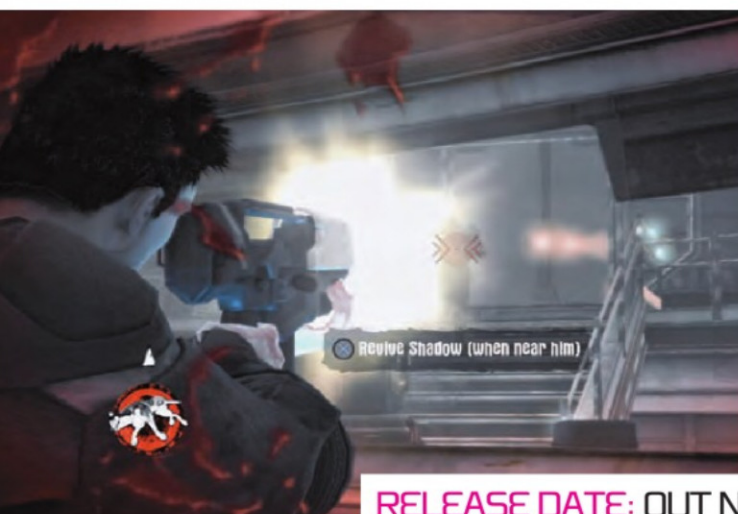
86%



Previously...
in Play



PREVIEWED Issue 190
"It was up to players to connect the dots and make *Skate* sing, but now *Skate 3* is doing that for all of us."



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW



● The plot twist involves these guys. Instead of spoiling it, we'll let you predict it at the beginning of the game for yourself.



DETAILS

Publisher
Namco Bandai
Developer
Volatile Games
Price
£44.99
Players
1
Genre
Third-person shooter/
Beat-'em-up
Supports
720p, Downloadable
content, DualShock 3,
Dolby Digital 5.1
Age Rating
18
Website
www.deadtorights.com

Dead To Rights: Retribution

A game for every man and his dog?

Elsewhere in this issue, on page 52 to be precise, you'll find a preview of *Kane & Lynch 2: Dog Days*, which discusses the use of the word 'gritty', and goes on to argue that *Dog Days* is one of very few games to which 'gritty' genuinely applies. Generally a game described as 'gritty' tends to be "gratuitously violent, contains swearing and/or is just a bit nasty and gets the word 'gritty' slapped on it in an attempt to lend it some credibility and make it seem like there's more to it than mere shock value". There has never been a game that fits this description better than *Dead To Rights: Retribution*. In fact, it fits this description so well, we're pretty sure it's taking the piss.

Nevertheless Namco Bandai has decided to market it as 'gritty', as well as 'hard-hitting', 'no holds barred' and even 'neo-noir' when,

if we were trying to sell it to people we'd be focusing on 'funny' and 'guilty pleasure'. Yes, not only is *Retribution* the epitome of a 'gritty' game, it's also probably both the guiltiest and most pleasurable guilty pleasure we've ever had the shame-tainted privilege to enjoy.

It feels like a homage to the action games of about a decade ago – embarrassingly macho titles such as *Fighting Force*, *Dynamite Cop* and *Die Hard Arcade* – only taken to excessive extremes for a bit of a laugh, which is probably what it is. This makes the game feel very dated and it's pretty rough around the edges, but it also makes it both fun and funny.

As has been the case since *Dead To Rights II*, the one and only thing that sets the series apart from other generic action games is Shadow, Jack Slate's huge dog. In *Retribution*, Shadow can perform vicious, bloody attacks on enemies, including one where he bites them between the legs and sort of chews while thrashing about for a few seconds. The game calls this both a 'Testi-kill' and a 'Scrotality'. If you don't think this is funny, then you're not going to like *Dead To Rights: Retribution* at all. If you do think it's funny then there's a fair chance it will entertain you all the way through, but it will be in a 'laughing while shaking your head' kind of a way, not in a 'wow, I'm glad I spent £40 on this' kind of a way. As a rental or bargain-bucket impulse buy a year from now it's perfect, but we're reluctant to recommend a day one purchase.

There aren't many things that are specifically *wrong* with *Dead To Rights: Retribution*, it's just that broadly speaking,

it's not particularly good. The combat, both ranged and melee, works well enough and actually offers decent variety, but it's mostly a bit clumsy and doesn't feel very skill-based. It can be satisfying to string together a variety of techniques, mind you. Say you encounter a group of enemies and you're unarmed. You could run up to one, snatch his gun off him, shoot him in the face with it, then grab another enemy, force him into an armlock and use him as a human shield as you shoot the rest of the group. If he's still alive when

This could be the guiltiest and most pleasurable guilty pleasure ever

you're done, you can toss him over a balcony or something. It's fun, although generally not particularly slick.

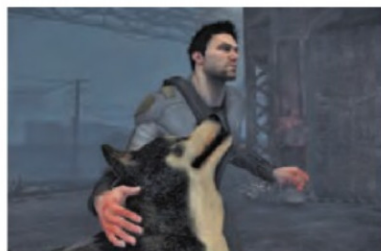
Then there are the Takedowns, which are a matter of beating an enemy 'til he's stunned then pressing (X) when you are prompted to do so. You're then treated to one of a selection of extremely violent, slow-motion kill sequences, most of which are guaranteed to set the head-shaking laughs off. Takedowns are further escalated when you unlock weapon Takedowns, whereby tapping (R2) immediately after pressing (X) will activate a sequence involving whatever gun you have in your hand at the time. You might, for example, shoot each kneecap then, as your victim collapses to his knees crying in pain, slam him so hard in the chest with your rifle that he's launched into the air, giving you the opportunity to empty the rest of your clip into

ME AND MY SHADOW

Love hurts... especially when it has such big teeth

MOST OF RETRIBUTION'S story campaign involves you playing through flashbacks interspersed with conversations between Jack and a female paramedic who, at first, appears to be a love interest. At one point he tells

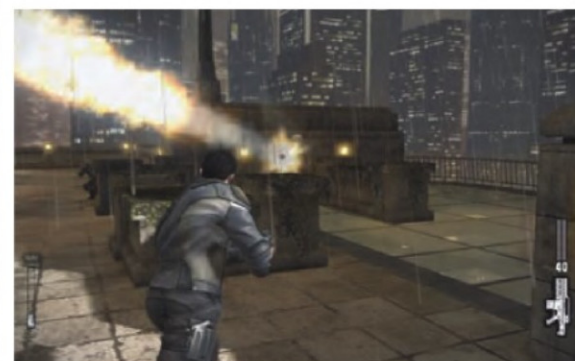
her he needs a sponge bath, the cad! But it's soon clear that there's another character who Jack has even stronger feelings for. We're not suggesting anything inappropriate has gone on but look at the pictures and make up your own mind.



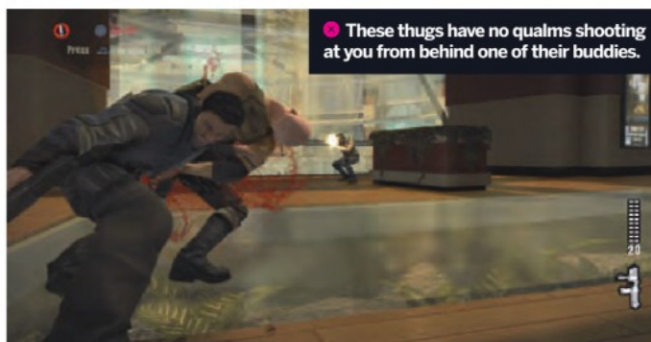
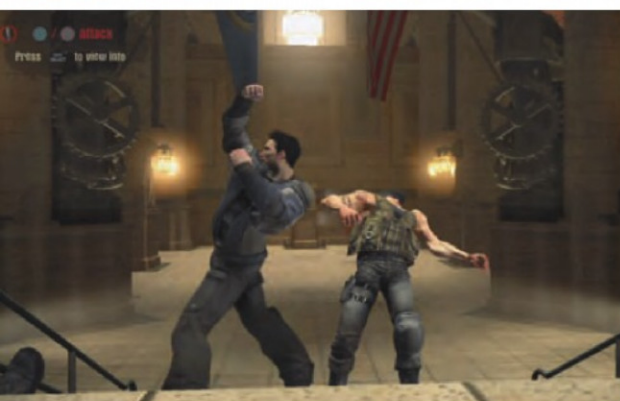
Dead To Rights: Retribution



You can give Shadow simple orders when playing as Jack, and even control him directly on some sections.



Each enemy loses about four pints of blood per punch.



These thugs have no qualms shooting at you from behind one of their buddies.



him before he returns back down to earth. We enjoyed these sequences, at least the first few times each, but in gameplay terms they're very basic and we do sometimes worry that the non-gaming world thinks that this is what all games are like and we're not sure if Namco Bandai and Volatile should really be praised for adding fuel to the fire.

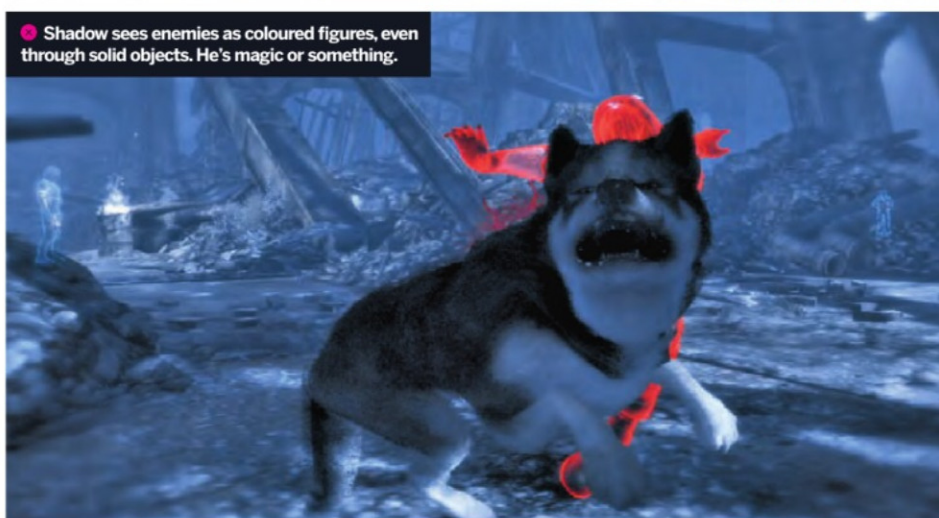
So yes, it's more of a throwback than a takedown, but *Dead To Rights: Retribution* is still a fun, entertaining way to while away a few hours. As long as you're expecting a bit of a lowbrow laugh rather than a gritty, hard-hitting neo-noir, you shouldn't be too disappointed.

Gavin Mackenzie

VERDICT

Fun and funny, but lowbrow and unambitious on a creative and technical level. You'll be entertained through most of its duration, but don't expect to be impressed even once.

68%



Shadow sees enemies as coloured figures, even through solid objects. He's magic or something.





RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Nier

The end's not Nier, it's here



DETAILS

Publisher
Square Enix
Developer
Cavia
Price
£39.99
Players
1
Genre
RPG
Supports
720p, Downloadable content, DualShock 3, Dolby Digital 5.1, Custom soundtracks
Age Rating
15
Website
www.niergame.com

Nier is an action-RPG, somewhere between *Kingdom Hearts* and *God Of War* in execution. That mere description, however, would be leaving out all the bizarre details that make the game what it is: the fact that you can punch sheep with a giant fist, the sexy-but-possibly-a-man sidekick, or, most obscenely, the demonic talking book that sounds like Alan Rickman. Remarkably, despite all this, *Nier* still manages to be rather boring.

It's a combination of dull factors, really. The plot follows the ageing hero, Nier, as he tries to save his daughter, Yonah, from a demonic infection known as the black scrawl. Early on, *Nier* is little more than dull fetch quest after fetch quest, broken up by fights of varying scale, before it starts to open up into something a little more *Zelda-y*.

The primary problem with *Nier* is that the combat is pretty flaccid. This is a sub-GOW affair reliant on hammering the $\odot$ button and the dodge-roll command until any given encounter is resolved, with little room for tactics or instinctive kinetic reactions. Magic abilities improve this situation, but the core mechanics are slow and uninteresting. These augmented super abilities include the

aforementioned big fist, as well as *Prototype*-style spikes that pierce surrounding enemies and lances you can shoot from a distance, all of which increase in power as you move through the game.

Where *Nier* becomes clever, however, is in its sense of progression. It starts slow but comes into its own through weapon and ability customisation, something performed by collecting 'words', each of which have a positive effect on one of the stats in the game. All of this is underpinned by the user-friendly interface, too, as everything in the menu screens is controlled by a few flicks of the stick. Despite being a complex game, Cavia elected to bury the tutorials in the menu screen, a charitable move that means players will never feel bullied by waves of unending instructions.

All of this lovely behind-the-scenes effort is cancelled out by the game's visuals, however. *Nier* is ugly. We're not just talking about the technology employed, which recalls the PS2's graphical capabilities at their worst – the art direction is almost sleepy, like you're permanently looking at a really boring

postcard of Eastbourne sent by a tedious relative. The problem is we've been spoiled in recent times by the visual bombardment of titles like *FFXIII* and *God Of War III*. The spectacle in *Nier* – including a number of large boss battles and sprawling, populated environments – doesn't come close to competing on the same level.

So, left to save the day is the game's contextual quirks, a polarising set of sub-features within the world that seem almost engineered to bother the mind-set of the modern Western man. You'll be collecting mutton after slaughtering animals, beating

For the most part Nier is completely bizarre and happy being that way

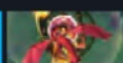
up *Doctor Who*-style robots in search of their innards, all the while being mocked by your Rickman-esque partner in crime. The structure of each quest tends to be unfortunately identical, but the fun lies in seeing how bizarre they get; the periphery characters can be reasonably amusing, even if one particular old lady managed to ruin 20 minutes of our lives. For most, such

GO AWAY, YOU OLD BAG

The odd NPCs of the Nier world

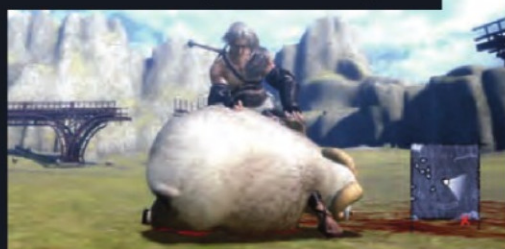
ONE OF THE less-talked-about parts of *Nier*, in its run-up to release, is the fact that it's quirky in a rather overstated way. A prime example of this comes about three hours into the game, when an old lady asks you to help her in rather a rude way – she then gives you a choice, as to whether you will assist her or not. After rejecting her pleas for help, we walked off and assumed that'd be the end of it. Then, later on, your sick daughter tells you to help her anyway.

We don't know what the point of that was. *Nier* has choices, like this, that turn out to be entirely moot within the wider context of the game.





● You're probably wondering what happened here. Well, we killed the sheep, now we're skinning it.



● Some of the stronger magic powers make *Nier* a more rewarding hack-'n'-slash title, but it's still boring overall.



deliberately obtuse NPCs will irritate, but to gamers schooled in *Disgaea's* brand of odd humour, this weird tone might be the ticket.

That's what *Nier* is, though – completely bizarre and happy being that way. Beyond punching sheep with a big hand, this might have a limited mark for most gamers governed by logic. Still, it took seven hours for us to stop laughing at the idea of brutally swatting farmyard animals for absolutely no reason whatsoever, so perhaps Square Enix is on to something with this, even if the rest of *Nier* fails to distinguish itself in any of the genres it touches upon.

Samuel Roberts

VERDICT

Needlessly obscure, this weird action-RPG hybrid is sometimes provocative but rarely less than self-indulgent. *Nier* spends hours being impressively boring as you plod through the drab overworld, but the smart progression saves its blushes.

54%



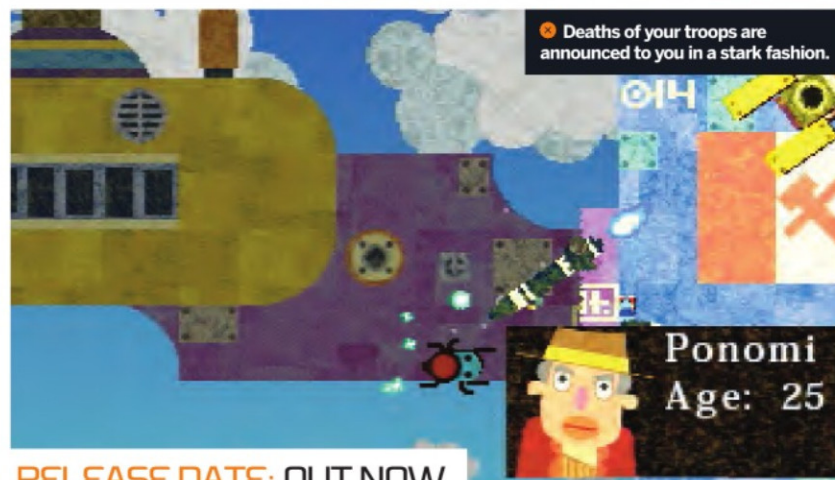
● The game starts many years in the past – it takes the story a while to explain why.



Sure. Now stay here and rest. We can't have your cough coming back.



● Taking off bigger chunks slows ships down more.



● Deaths of your troops are announced to you in a stark fashion.

Ponomi
Age: 25

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW



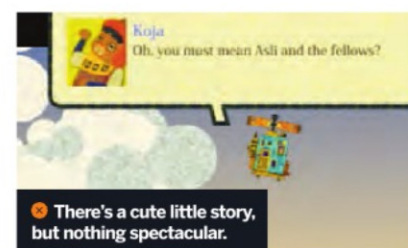
Patchwork Heroes

We came, we saw, we reviewed it quite late

Publisher: Sony Computer Entertainment Developer: SCE Japan Studio
Price: £6.29 Players: 1 Genre: Puzzle Supports: TV In/Out Age Rating: 7 Website:
<http://uk.playstation.com/psn/games/detail/item263843/Patchwork-Heroes/>

Welcome to a super-late review of *Patchwork Heroes*, released all the way back in March. Normally we'd probably write it off as a missed opportunity to tell you about it and move on, but this is different: *Patchwork Heroes* is great. It needs to be pointed out to everyone with a PSP that for £6.29 (PlayStation Network only) you can get a genuinely lovely little puzzler, well worth the cash and a fine way to waste your time with Sony's much-maligned handheld.

Players take control of a little chap handling a saw, who navigates his way around large airships and cuts them apart piece by piece. It's a very basic formula but works astonishingly well, and the few variables thrown in – friendly captives, areas of the ship that have to be protected and numerous different enemy types – mean just as you've got used to the game, it mixes things up again. 30 levels accompany ten challenges, and each can (and will) be replayed as many times as you can bear, trying to beat your old scores, lose



● There's a cute little story, but nothing spectacular.

less people or rescue more hostages. It's great fun.

It helps *Patchwork Heroes* no end that the game looks utterly lovely, with – unsurprisingly – a patchwork look to everything in the game and some charming animation. Oh, and we shouldn't forget the fine music, nor should we leave out a special mention for the sometimes-hilarious translation.

Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

For just over £6 you get one of the best puzzle games on PSP. *Patchwork Heroes* is worth every penny, and is a great example of why the PSP is still worth owning.

85%



DETAILS

Publisher
SouthPeak Games

Developer
Silicon Studio

Price
£39.99

Players
1

Genre
RPG

Supports
720p, Downloadable content, DualShock 3

Age Rating
7

Website
www.3ddotgameheroes.com

RELEASE DATE: 14 MAY

3D Dot Game Heroes

A spot of hero worship

We've been in love with *3D Dot Game Heroes* for ages now, ever since we first learned that the world was inhabited by objects, creatures and people in three dimensions because of royal decree. How could you not love a game world which is created because the King decided that no one was interested in 2D? But we did worry: we thought that *3D Dot* might end up being a one-trick pony; a shallow experience backed up by a few half-hearted jokes that would get old quickly. It's always nice to have your innate cynicism proven wrong, and From Software's latest has done so with gusto.

3D Dot Game Heroes isn't just harking back to the days of the 2D *Zelda* games on S/NES, it pretty much is those days in all but

the looks department. To say it's influenced by the legendary action-RPG series would be a minor understatement (of epic proportions), as this is more *Zelda*-like than *Zelda* itself. Aside from the fantastic 8-bit-infused music and selection of mini-games there isn't much we would consider new – the exploration, dungeon crawling and basic combat/magic is all stuff we saw 20-plus years ago. Graphically it's wonderful, as you can see in the screens here, and the ability to create your own character with a robust and simple creation tool is a minor masterstroke.

But feeling fuzzy inside can only cloud our judgement for so long and – trained professionals as we are – we were able to find a few issues here and there that hold

the game back from genuine classic status. Difficulty can be an issue, and not always for the right reasons with collision detection and basic controls sometimes feeling like they're letting you down, along with some slowdown. There are also occasions where you have to

To say it's influenced by *Zelda* would be an understatement

move statues around to solve puzzles, and it can be quite hard to see which statues are and aren't pushable. These are just minor faults, though, don't let our whining make you think anything else.

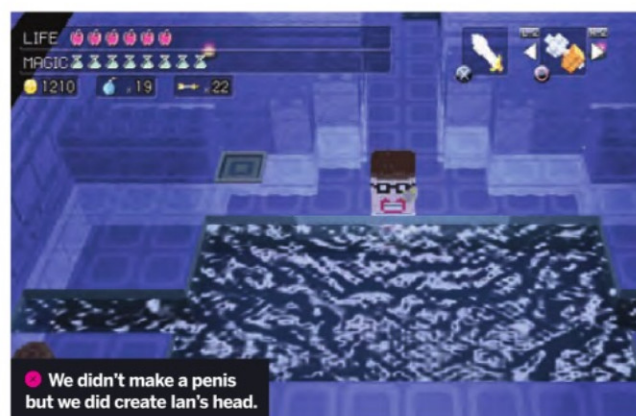
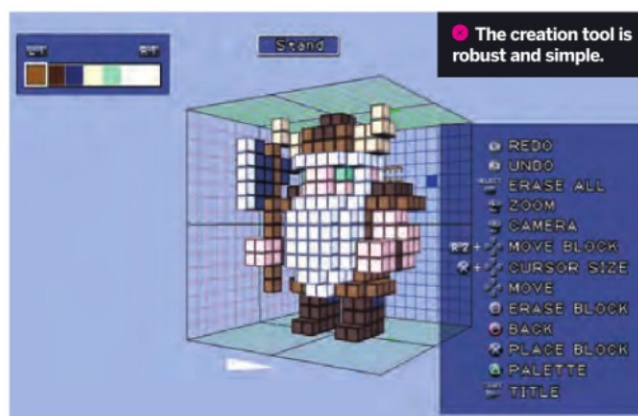
3D Dot Game Heroes may bring nothing new to gaming, but it brings a classic style of game to PlayStation 3. It's fantastically warm-hearted and clearly made with real passion. The game itself has a few irritating issues, but all in all it's great to see a game like this both made and released on these shores.

Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

On one hand it brings nothing new to the table and has some irritating faults. On the other, it's a thoroughly joyful experience and will warm the cockles of anyone who plays.

87%





DETAILS

Publisher
Tecmo Koei
Developer
Team Ninja
Price
£29.99
Players
1
Genre
Sports
Supports
TV In/Out
Age Rating
16
Website
<http://tecmokoei-europe.com/>

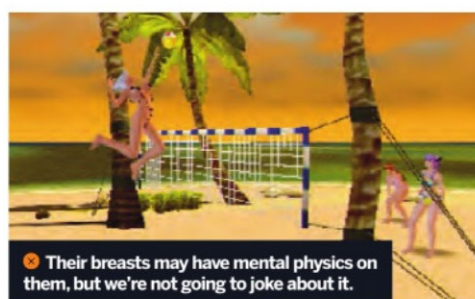


RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Dead Or Alive: Paradise

Single-handedly raising gaming from the doldrums

To truly understand the depth of thinking behind *Dead Or Alive: Paradise* – a spin-off of the Xbox's *Xtreme Beach Volleyball* series – one needs to take into consideration a number of factors. For one there is the sociological impact of what we are going to refer to here as a 'game': the simple act of



• Their breasts may have mental physics on them, but we're not going to joke about it.

gathering together a group of virtual women to lounge about on a beautiful island could be seen as a broad-ranging commentary on the state of capitalism in the West, or simply as a deconstruction of the myth concerning women as the weaker sex. Approaching the distractions on offer, it becomes clear to the user of this product that Tecmo is indeed a genius in its field; a company who will truly make the user consider who they are as a person and why it is they choose this – videogaming – as a source of entertainment. The main attraction of volleyball, as simplistic as it is, can captivate in short bursts, but the developer decided to challenge perceptions once more by making things irritatingly difficult at times – a study into human reactionary theory, surely?



• She may look like she's naked, but we won't make any jokes about that.

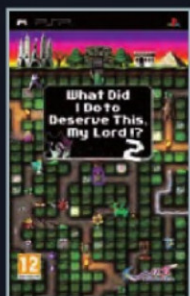
Then, of course, there is the much-needed discussion on gambling and its place in society, handled with gusto by *Paradise* and its selection of blackjack, poker and slots. We rarely make predictions, but *Dead Or Alive: Paradise* will surely win the Nobel Prize for its contributions to humanity.

Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

Or: it's just a bunch of forgettable mini-games with some decent visuals, laced with tawdry, voyeuristic tendencies. It plays okay in parts, but is at best forgettable; at worst downright creepy. And it won't win a Nobel Prize.

56%



DETAILS

Publisher
NIS America
Developer
Acquire
Price
£24.99
Players
1
Genre
Strategy
Supports
TV out
Age Rating
12
Website
<http://nisamerica.com/games/mylord2/>

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

What Did I Do To Deserve This, My Lord!? 2

My... that's a very long title...

When you play a videogame sequel you'll often find yourself picking holes in its similarities, and the same is true of *My Lord 2*. It's clear early on that this is much the same as the last – creating your own labyrinthine dungeon

bigger, has 3.3 times more monsters and 2.5 times the heroes and, while we haven't done the maths to validate these claims, it is clear that now your spacious dungeons will simply swarm with gelatinous blobs, bony ant-creatures and asexual lizardmen.

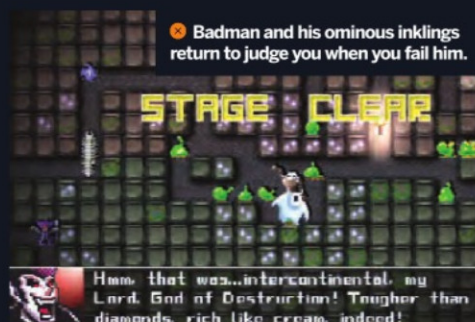
The updates and improvements help bring more to the series, with a variety of new mutations for your

Badman Army, all of which have their own negatives and positives. Additional heroes and new abilities also mean you'll need to take a more active part in their quests by

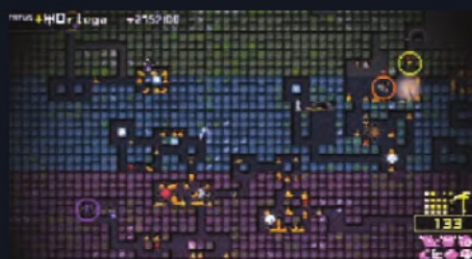
My Lord 2 is as addictive as its predecessor and equally rewarding

to give birth to an ecosystem of monsters to help fend impudent heroes away.

Not to say there aren't improvements, of course. We're told this version is four times



• Badman and his ominous inklings return to judge you when you fail him.



• For the egomaniacal, you can overview your dungeon and see how well your ecosystem has panned out.



• Dale has a headache. Which basically means he's dead, which is a good thing. But not for Dale.

destroying traps or 'accidentally' deleting their saves.

We would have liked to see a little more development, but the updated features and tweaked UI make *My Lord 2* as addictive as its predecessor and equally rewarding.

Adam Barnes

VERDICT

My Lord 2 is a devilishly addictive and challenging title, albeit with only slight improvements on the first. Considering the original is bundled on the UMD, though, it's difficult not to recommend.

78%

PLAY# Network News

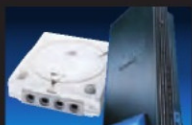
プレーバック News and views from the PSN

演劇 ター

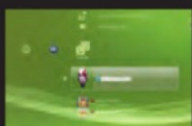
WHAT WE WANT TO SEE

Games, features, downloads – the things we think would make the PSN better

1 PS2 and Dreamcast games: This may well stay at number one for a while. It would take some serious firmware updates and downloads in the 4GB range, but think of the possibilities: *Shadow Of The Colossus*, *Soul Calibur*, *Shenmue*...



2 Friend-of-a-friend viewing: This feature exists on Live, allowing you to view the friends list of a friend. It's a great way of finding people you might not have known were online, and would be a small, but welcome addition to PSN.



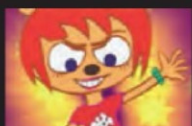
3 *The Secret Of Monkey Island Special Edition*: We've been told it's coming, along with *Monkey Island 2 Special Edition*, but that doesn't make the wait any easier. Redrawn artwork, full voice work and remastered music for one of the best adventure series ever made? PSN needs this now.



4 Cross-game chat: Why are we still unable to talk to our friends while we play different games to them? What's the issue? It's limiting and harms the PSN experience, and is something that definitely needs sorting out.



5 *PaRappa The Rapper* / *UmJammer Lammy*: As we said in the retro feature last issue, one is out on PSP, one on the US PSN. Why haven't we had them released on the European PSN? Classic games that launched the rhythm-action genre, and as ageless as a classic can get.



WWWTs news:

FFIX dropped from the list following the announcement it will be released on PSN. Now we play the waiting game.



MAG-MORTEM

Plays speaks to Zipper to find out how MAG has fared since launch

We spoke to Jeremy Dunham, senior community manager at Zipper Interactive, to find out how the company feels *MAG* has fared since its release at the end of January.

Asked how successful the game had been in its opening months, Dunham said, "We're really happy with how our first month turned out. In that time, we've had more than 750,000 people play in excess of half a million games and that number continues to grow every day. There were 360 million in-game kills for the first 30 days – that's 12 million kills a day!" He went on, "For a new franchise that didn't have any previous titles, nor an established brand name, that's a great start and hopefully one we can continue to expand upon as we go forward."

But what about the player response? Reviews were mixed (68%, *Play* 189) but fan reaction seemed positive – was it the same for Zipper? "We had some great reviews and



Zipper intends to keep supporting *MAG* despite turning its attentions to *SOCOM 4*.

the constraints of the game universe and implementing them quickly is where we put our concerns."

But the big question would be if Zipper was still committed to *MAG*, even though it is now working on *SOCOM 4*. Dunham was adamant, "If you take the game as it was released



Despite mixed reviews, *MAG* has done well.

There were 360 million in-game kills for the first 30 days

some okay reviews. Different people want and expect different things, so seeing non-uniform scores across the board – especially for a game as different as *MAG* – isn't that surprising." Dunham continued, "Honestly, though, our most important critics are our users. If they're buying and playing the game, that's the best endorsement. Supporting them, understanding their needs within

on 26 January and compare it to the game it is now, it's a different experience. Sure there are commonalities and plenty of things that make it recognisable, but the whole philosophy behind *MAG* is that it's a platform that we're constantly evolving. We want you to feel like the game is changing all the time, and we're dedicated to supporting that kind of an experience."

SINGSTARMAGEDDON

The world may melt down with the addition of online battles

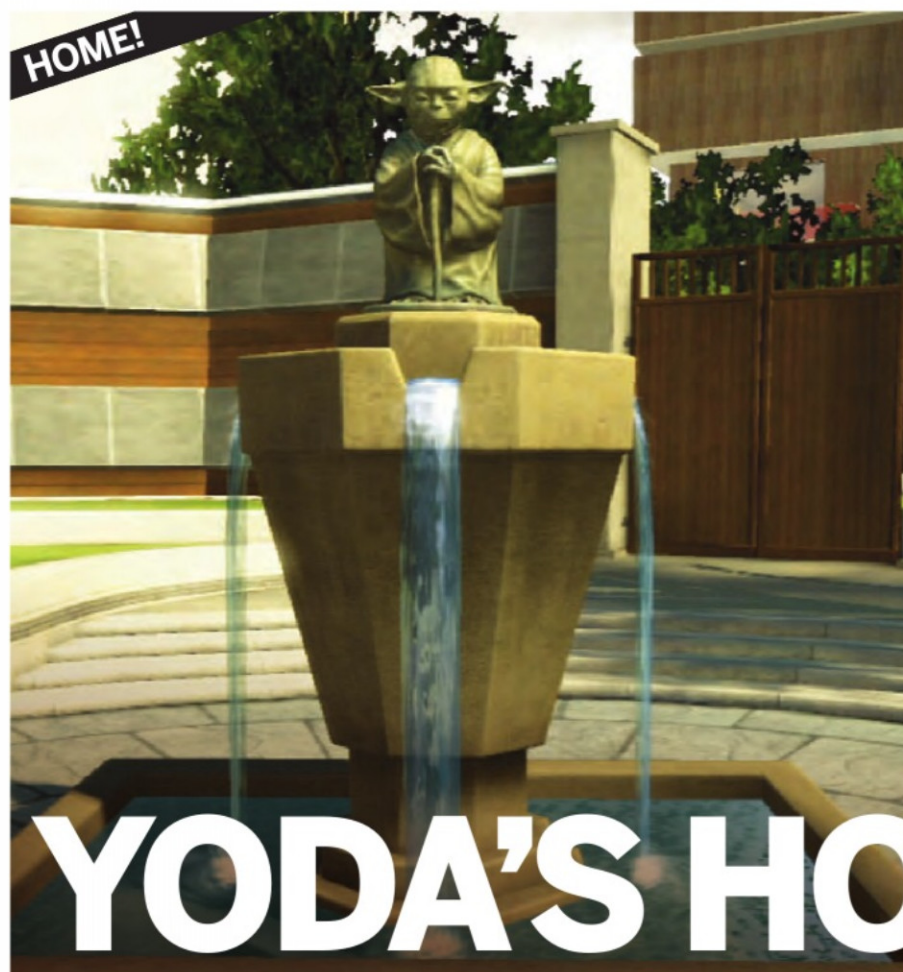


The karaoke game will no longer be confined to an individual's front room.

Come June we'll finally be able to take part in what we've always wanted: online *SingStar* battles. If you claim you aren't interested in this feature, you are lying. It's obvious, as *SingStar* is brilliant.

Online battles will allow players to face off against friends: send an invite, pick up your mic and get sing(star)ing against each other. We haven't been able to try the feature out yet, so we're in the dark as to whether it works well enough or not, but the functionality of *Rock Band* / *Guitar Hero* online gives us confidence Sony will get it right. So long as our wailing battles aren't interrupted by lag and other such online scourges, it's bound to be a treat for committed *SingStar*ers.

Sony has been running a beta for the mode, though by the time this issue is out it may have ended. Take a look at <http://bit.ly/c2FCCz> for more details.



YODA'S HOME

How does Home compare to real life?

Those of you visiting the LucasArts store front on Home will see many elements relating to all things *Star Wars*, including a rather nifty Yoda fountain. But you may not realise this is modelled on a very real fountain located just outside the very real LucasArts offices. We travelled all the way to San Francisco just to have a look at the real thing and see if it could compare to Yoda's majesty in Home*.

(*All right, so we didn't go there *just* to see the fountain, just go along with our little fantasy.)

WAR FOR DLC

We ask DLC questions. High Moon answers

The upcoming *Transformers: War For Cybertron* will support three-player co-op out of the box. But what about that ever-present subject of DLC? Which we also asked LucasArts about, too.

Well, Matt Tieger of High Moon Studios had this to say, "We are big multiplayer gamers – we're just big gamers in general – and thinking about DLC and supporting with DLC, well – we're not actually unleashing our strategy for DLC, but you can probably take a pretty good guess at what things would make sense for us based on being a *Transformers* property. But I'm not going to give you any more than that. How's that for a 'no answer'?"

That, Matt, is a better 'no answer' than we normally get from people.



NOT ENOUGH STAR WARS?

We spoil you with this stuff, really

WE WERE CHEEKY enough to ask Haden Blackman of LucasArts a few extra questions once back in Blighty about *The Force Unleashed II*'s potential for online components and DLC. On whether the team have considered online or multiplayer components of the game, Blackman said, "We have nothing to announce at this time regarding multiplayer, though we are planning to

support online leaderboards for our new Challenge mode."

And as for DLC? "We are definitely keeping DLC in mind while designing *The Force Unleashed II*, though we have nothing to announce at this time regarding future DLC content."

The answers probably won't surprise you all that much, but hey – at least we asked the question.





● Hopefully the community will be fun and not full of idiots.



● It does look suitably oppressive and regime-y.



● This man is blurry, possibly because he's super-fast or something.



RELEASE DATE: SUMMER

Blacklight: Tango Down

Slightly more interesting than you've given it credit for

It's hard to ignore the fact that *Blacklight: Tango Down* looks really quite generic. It isn't the kind of game to make you pay the fullest attention to a page through its life-altering screenshots, nor will you pay much attention to it if you read a bit into it. But that's far too negative: there is something worth paying attention to here, and something that may see *Blacklight* carve itself a new groove in the world of digital distribution. It has high production values and looks like many other mainstream, high-budget titles, but it will cost you around the £10 to £15 mark. Zombie Studios, creator of the game, is aiming to draw people in through this particular USP and keep hold of their attention with a hugely customisable online shooter. Suddenly it all looks a bit more interesting.

Blacklight adopts a familiar strategy to the likes of *Modern Warfare 2* and

Bad Company 2 by offering endless online battles in which players can pick up experience and grow their character. Where *Zombie's* game differs, though, is in its sheer level of customisation – something the company is keen to emphasise in order to draw people in. Characters can be usefully altered – armour designs and suchlike change the stats of a player, offering boosts and losses in various areas. Weapon design is another element open to the player's whims: guns can be altered to have accessories like scopes or barrels attached – the latter may concentrate your projectiles to make the weapon more like a rifle, or conversely spread the payload out to make it more like a shotgun. These customisable elements are unlocked as players progress and level up through *Blacklight*. Each level the player is given a capsule which bestows a

random award (from around 100 available) upon them – a simple element offering a small boost – while every 15 levels the player receives a new character type to use; the likes of light, heavy and medium troops are unlocked with all the perks and anti-perks you might expect from them.

There is no single-player in *Blacklight*, with the developer instead focusing on a few multiplayer aspects of the game. Co-op play is available with teams of up to four people tackling objective-based missions against AI bots. Standard multiplayer, however, is where the real meat is and Zombie is aiming to give people a real

hook to come back and play the game compulsively. The aforementioned custom character element is the big factor in this, but the dev hopes to augment this side attraction with solid online framework: around 12 maps available on launch, a handful of game modes you would expect from an online FPS (last man standing, deathmatch and so on) and different loadouts make this familiar territory. What we played was perfectly functional, if not a bit basic, but as with all online-only games its real test comes with the community that forms around it.

There is a back story to *Blacklight* and it is something Zombie and its

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

● You can't argue with a price around £10-£15. It certainly beats £50.

● Nor can you argue with the kind of production values in *Blacklight*.

● Customisation may help to keep things fresh for a while after release.

● It's always nice to have something other than *MW2* and *BC2* to play.



● We'd guess this is a more shotgunny gun.

DO YOU SEE?

Real-world technology shows real vision. ZOMBIE IS KEEN to stress *Blacklight's* 'science fact' background, away from the realm of science fiction. What this means is feasible real-world technology used by the two in-game factions, such as the HRV. While this may just be a heads-up display in basic terms, under the surface it functions as an intrinsic element of the game's mechanics. The fact that players can see through walls and targets are highlighted may seem a bit cheesy, but HRVs make players highly visible to the enemy and can be countered with the vision-distorting digi-grenades. As with many elements of *Blacklight*, it's a balancing act.



● This shot is over the shoulder, but the game is an FPS.



● *Blacklight* is set in an unnamed Eastern European country. So not Rhyl.



● Faster, faster, kill, kill!

affiliates are keen to explore through both the game and other forms of media. The PSN release of *Blacklight* is to be backed up with a film release and comic books tied in to the game world. It's an approach we're seeing more often from the likes of EA, and it will be interesting to see if this multimedia/high-quality budget experiment pays off for Zombie. We find it hard to believe the game will take a serious chunk out of *Modern Warfare 2* and *Bad Company 2's* online audience, but we wouldn't mind being proven wrong.

Blacklight is being developed by Zombie Studios. Check out www.playtangodown.com for more details.

READ ME

Blacklight: Tango Down began life three years ago as a third-person strategic combat game. Somewhere along the development line this was changed to be an FPS.



● Snipers: nature's gifts.



● Ah, a first-person view. This is what it looks like in-game.

DEVELOPER Q&A

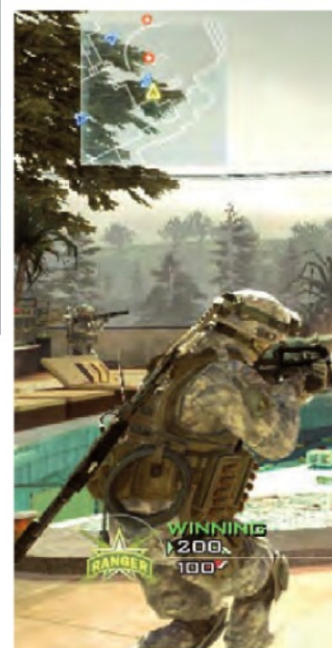
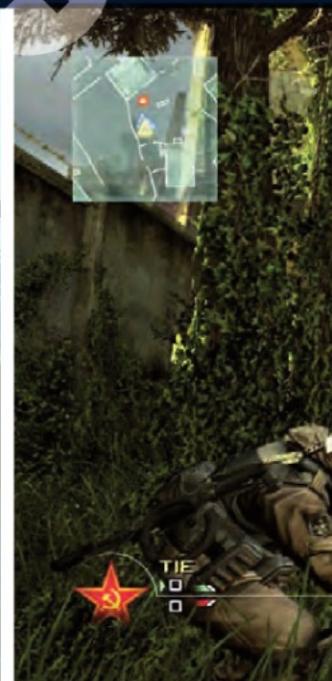
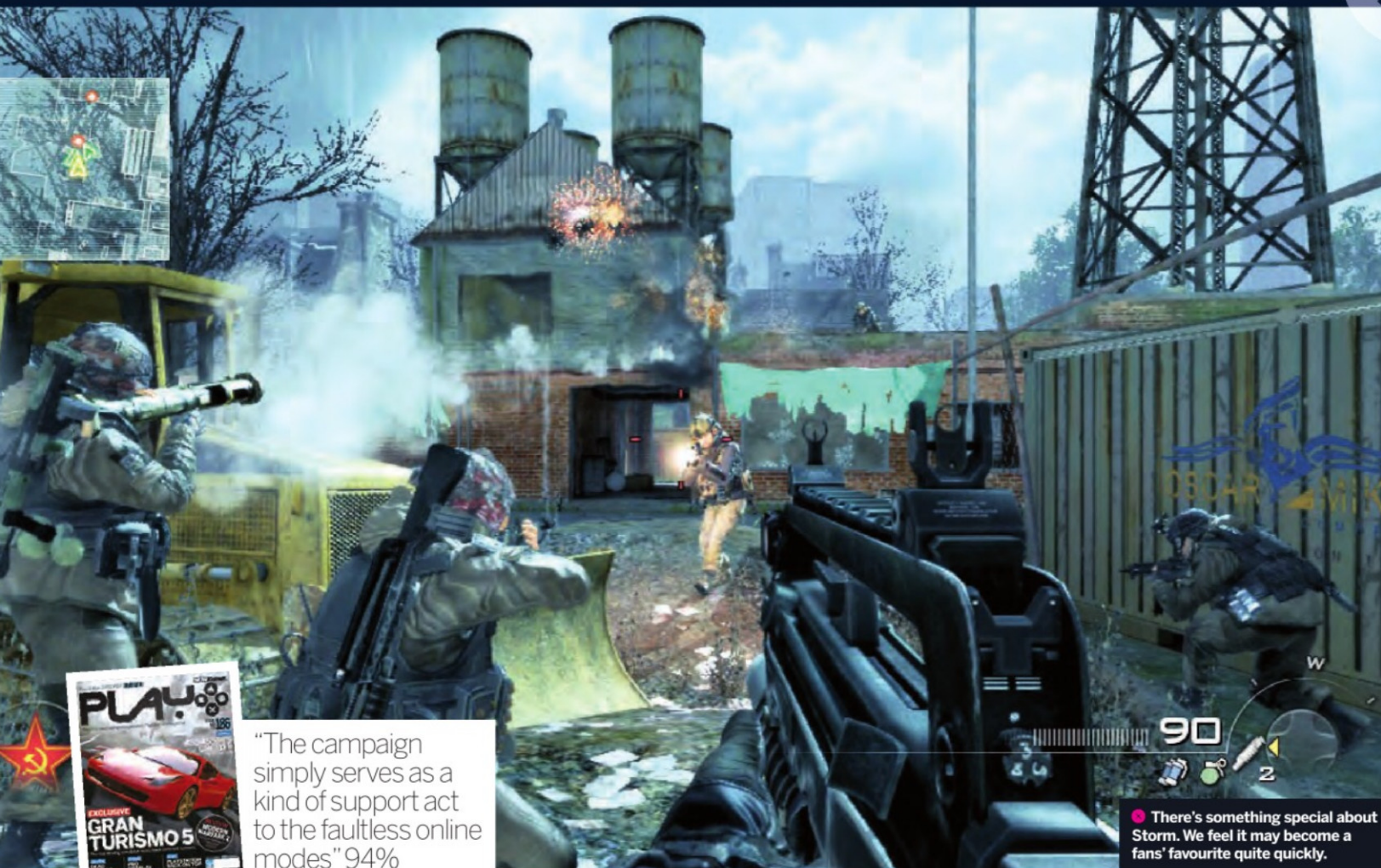
We sat down for a chat with Jared Gerritzen, lead game designer of *Blacklight*. He had these words to say:

Do you believe you're forging a new path for how games are made and released?

I think that what we're doing with this project and this team is definitely something that's not done anywhere. I think that the quality that we're bringing, the amount of content that we're bringing for the price point [*Blacklight*] definitely is going to raise the bar and set higher standards for DLC as a whole.

What were your main goals from a design perspective?

The goal of the game was really to start a new IP that we believed in; that we wanted to do. From there we branched out to what could be done and what hasn't been done yet. With *Tango Down* in particular we wanted to make a particularly solid multiplayer experience, we wanted to make a game that is not seen in DLC – I strongly believe in DLC and I believe that DLC will become a standard in probably the next five years. As hardware and technology increases you won't be keeping your games on discs – it'll be on a liquid-cooled hard drive of some sort that has enough space to download the internet in 15 minutes. And when it goes that way discs are old-school – you don't go to record stores any more, you download music. Why not download full games?



DETAILS

Publisher
Activision
Developer
Infinity Ward
Release Date
Out Now
Price
£11.99
Players
1-16
Genre
FPS
Supports
720p, Downloadable content, Sixaxis, Dolby Digital 5.1, DualShock 3

Modern Warfare 2: Stimulus Pack

Ready to stimulate your senses

And so it all begins again. If you're one of the many who was sucked in by Activision's powerhouse, the announcement of new maps will find you in one of two camps. 1) You've been dedicating your life to the biggest first-person shooter on the planet, chasing Perks until your fingers bleed. 2) The tremendously competitive edge of *Modern Warfare 2* finally toppled you from your perch, and you left the intense environment for those who had the courage. Regardless which group you find yourself in, the knowledge that more content has arrived is enough to pique your interest.

Consisting of five offerings, two of which come from the much-loved *Call Of Duty 4*, the most hard-hitting fact is the price. Although never healthy to overly focus on cost, it would be wrong of us to completely ignore it. £11.99

for what is, realistically, only three extras is shocking. Even if the quality was off the chart, and we'll get to that imminently, the fee has raised a few eyebrows. For those who aren't swayed by such facts, the following awaits.

Consisting of Storm, Bailout and Salvage (along with Overgrown and Crash from Infinity Ward's previous *Call Of Duty* outing), the *Stimulus Pack* isn't infallible. Easily the weakest of the bunch, Salvage seems to lack the IW charm we're so used to. An extremely tight map, requiring plenty of sprinting between areas and a fast trigger-finger, it fails in its efforts to bring the fluidity we've all become so used to. Clearly meant to be approached with 'run-n'-gun' in mind, it's a guessing game as to who will get the kill. You'll find yourself being brought to your knees as much as you plant

a bullet in an opponent's brain. This constant coin-flipping guessing game becomes frustrating very quickly.

Thankfully, from a pristine perspective, this is the only flaw in the package with Bailout and Storm proving to have some serious longevity, the former boasting an insane level of

£11.99 for what is, realistically, only three extras is a little shocking

complexity. Certainly not an addition that will win the *Modern Warfare 2* user over instantly, the apartment settlement is rife with ways to kill and be killed. Presenting huge lines of sight for those with the skill, advantageous spots are never safe due to the deliberate decision to make flanking a constant threat. The result is a

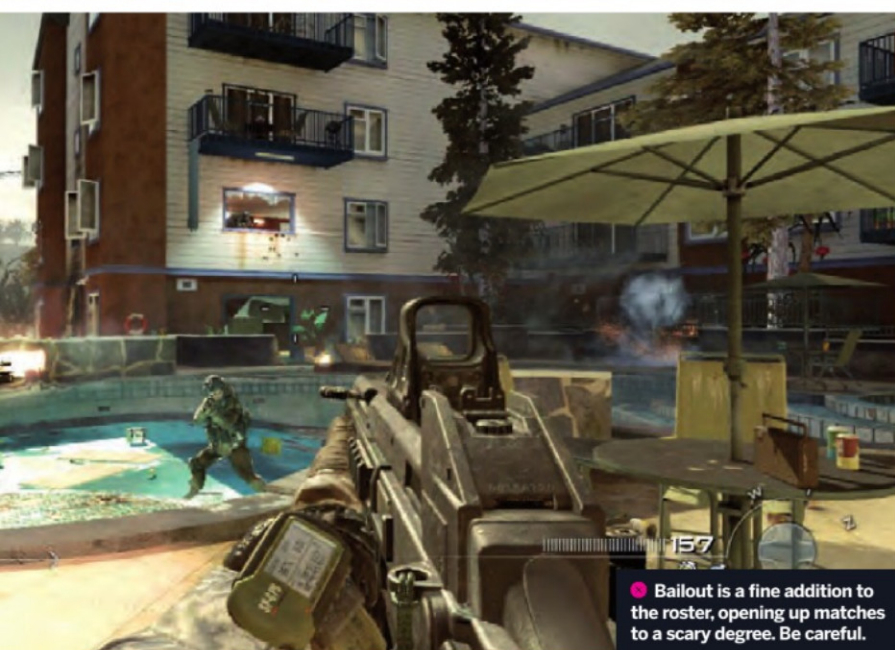
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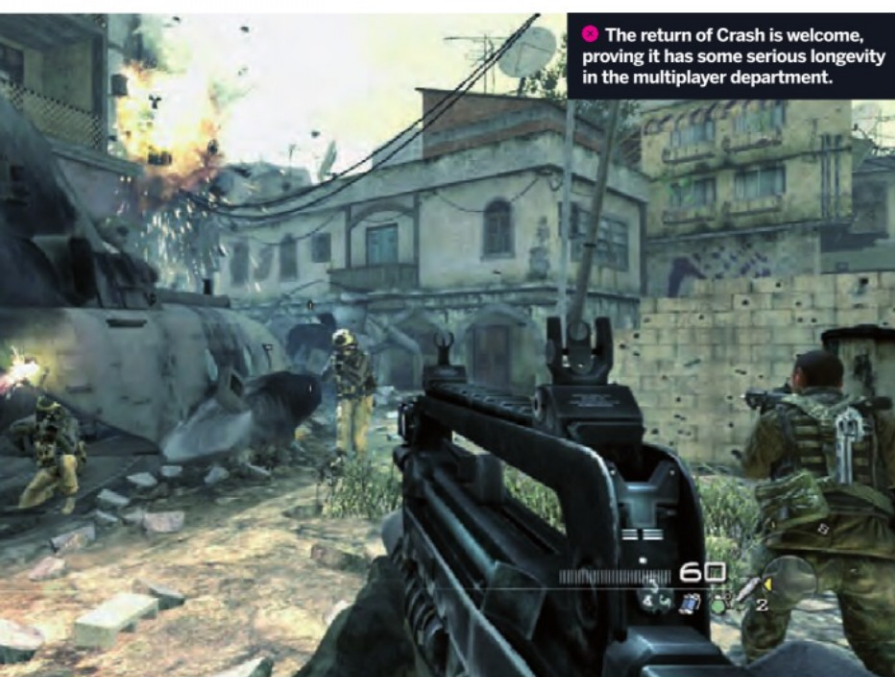
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Although we appreciate its relevance, Overgrown is not a map we would've brought back.



Bailout is a fine addition to the roster, opening up matches to a scary degree. Be careful.



The return of Crash is welcome, proving it has some serious longevity in the multiplayer department.

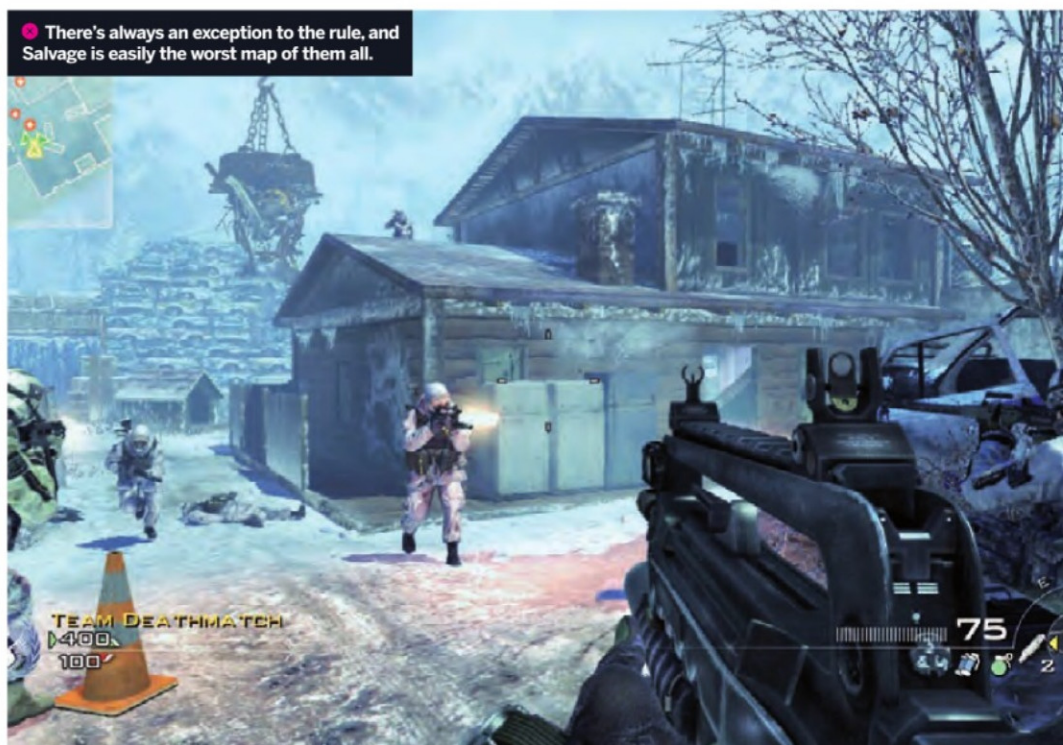
GETTING YOUR GAME ON

Keeping it stimulated

FOR THE IMPATIENT among you, Infinity Ward has seen fit to include a 'Stimulus Pack' option when it comes to selecting what you want to play. Enabling you to go through the new maps with a random mode selected each time, it's the perfect way to get acquainted with the additional content as well as encourage you to try a few options you may instinctively stay away from. Admittedly

a few of the modes don't work particularly well where this DLC is concerned, but at least you can cross such failures off your list. As ever, anyone who wants to carry on within their routine can sit and hope the new maps eventually pop up. It can be a frustrating wait, but at least you'll have the now classic offerings to tide you over as you linger.

There's always an exception to the rule, and Salvage is easily the worst map of them all.



continually tense experience that refuses to let up, opening up Bailout for massive shoot-outs, often from quite a distance.

Finally we have Storm, which is the best of the bunch for us. Set in what appears to be a collection of abandoned warehouses, the locale is given its epic edge thanks to the constant bombardment of rainfall. Perfectly set up for the likes of Domination, the real joy is taking advantage of differing levels. Those who decide to stay rooted to the floor will find their twitch gaming comes into play whereas individuals who take to higher ground can rely on a more tactical style. It's quick, focused and instantly gratifying.

Of course, the *Stimulus Pack*, as mentioned, also throws Overgrown and Crash from *COD 4* into the mix, the latter of which has been doing the rounds since the original *Modern Warfare*'s beta. Despite being a veteran of the multiplayer scene, it still manages to hold up and being able to inject the sequel's Perks and upgrades into it makes it relevant once again. Anyone who has deserted the 2007 title in favour of its update should be pleased to see it return. As for Overgrown, well, that all depends on how you play the game. Much like before, snipers and those who enjoy the more subtle side of multiplayer will relish the wide fields of

play as well as the opportunity to hide in the undergrowth. It can be incredibly irritating, however, for those with a more direct attack.

It's clear that Infinity Ward's knack for creating maps remains and the *Stimulus Pack* does do what its name suggests: motivates you to get back involved. If nothing else it freshens up a format that has started to become a little familiar. With that said, the price point is still questionable and having five brand-new maps rather than two familiar friends would have increased the power of the DLC no end. It only serves to wear down the novelty far faster than anyone will appreciate. There's still some gems here, though, meaning it will drive those who play constantly to keep doing so and entice the forgotten back into the mix. It's just a shame it's not the all encompassing beast it could've been.

Simon Miller

VERDICT

Infinity Ward's talent still shines through, but three new maps, one of which isn't great, just isn't justification enough for the high price point. If you're intent on adding to your *Modern Warfare 2* experience, though, you should still be pleased.

★★★★★



DETAILS

Publisher
Electronic Arts
Developer
BioWare
Release Date
Out Now
Price
£31.99
Players
1
Genre
RPG

Dragon Age: Awakening GAME/DLC

Awaken to a decent piece of Dragon Age DLC

Let's get one thing out of the way. In terms of presentation and visual fidelity *Dragon Age: Awakening* is just as much a stuttering mess as *Origins* was. With a jerky frame rate, poor character modelling and loathsome pop-up, it's one hell of an ugly game that makes its sci-fi counterpart *Mass Effect 2* look like a graphical masterpiece.

Now the good news, however. Beneath its drab visuals and choppy frame rate is a piece of DLC that's nearly on a par with the original *Dragon Age* experience and makes all those previous pieces of DLC look like the overpriced pieces of tat they actually were. Granted, it's an incredibly expensive piece of downloadable content weighing in at over £30 – more than the retail 360 version, but stupid, unfair DLC pricing is best left for another day – but the proof is in the fantasy pudding. For *Dragon Age: Awakening* is a truly gigantic piece of additional content that sets

new standards for future content – even if it does have an insanely high price point.

It's worth pointing out, however, that this is not the same follow-on experience that *Mass Effect 2* offered to lucky PC and Xbox 360 owners. While it is possible to port over your existing *Dragon Age* character, he or she will have very little impact on the new story that features in *Awakening*. They'll also be without much of their equipment, and with *Awakening* lacking the incredible character advancement that's seen in *Mass Effect 2*, you'll initially wonder why BioWare allowed you to port over your character in the first place.

Awakening's story is set roughly six months after the events in *Origins* and takes place with a mostly brand-new cast of characters. Yes, many of the minor heroes make a reappearance, but this is mostly a

new cast of heroes, all of whom are just as well fleshed out as Morrigan and co.

In terms of gameplay, *Awakening* is a case of more, more, more. There's a huge selection of new spells and skills to choose from, the level cap has been raised to 35 and you'll find plenty of new monsters and magic to fight

DLC that's nearly on a par with the original *Dragon Age* experience

and discover. Starting off in Warden's Keep you'll discover plenty of new locations, and meet a variety of interesting NPCs who are just as detailed as anything you'd discover in any BioWare RPG. At times it can all seem a little too overwhelming due to the sheer amount of choices on offer, but a few hours of play (especially if you're new to the franchise) is more than enough to have you slaying Darkspawn like the best of them.

Store Reviews

それはどのようによかったか。



So, er... you think there's an apothecary around here somewhere?

1. Probably, why?
2. Are you injured?
3. We don't have time for that.

Fans of the original game will recognise this particular fellow, as he's the only returning main character.



Environments look superb with a great sense of scale. It's just a shame it's oh so jerky.

Not played *Origins*? Don't worry you can start a new character from level 18.



Dragon Age: Awakening may lack the polish of *Origins* – which is slightly concerning as *Origins*' wasn't that great to begin with – and the carrying over of your character wasn't the success we were hoping it to be, but this is still a great package. The high price certainly smarts, but with a good 20 hours of gameplay – more than most full-price retail titles – it's difficult to ignore what is another genuinely enjoyable RPG.

Darran Jones

VERDICT

It's certainly pricey, but there's no denying that there's a hell of a lot of gameplay packed into BioWare's new piece of DLC. If only the character importing had been a bit more polished.

★★★★★

THAT BE DRAGONS

Drakes of all shapes and sizes CONSIDERING THE NAME of the title there were very few dragons to fight in *Origins*. Sure, you had that tough encounter in the werewolves' lair and the final battle with the archdemon was a real test, but they appeared all too rarely for our liking. No doubt listening to fan feedback, BioWare has added literally dozens of the scaly denizens in *Awakening* and it's not long before you're fighting dragonlings, drakes and everything in-between. Not only are these battles tough, but the rewards can be great and you'll often discover plenty of excellent items – not to mention a big boost to your XP – whenever you defeat them. Lovely.

Store Roundup



MEGA MAN 10 GAME

It's mega fun, but mega tough

Publisher Capcom Developer In-House Price £7.99 Players 1 Genre Platformer

MEGA MAN'S BACK for his tenth adventure and he's still making us swear like a fricking trooper. Beautifully styled with its 8-bit NES-styled visuals and featuring some truly superb – yet maddening – level design, *Mega Man*'s tenth outing proves that Capcom still knows how to make great – albeit rather frustrating – platform games.



With an impressive range of new bosses and plenty of new power-ups once you defeat them, you'll be hard-pressed finding a purer platform experience on PSN this year. Ignore the new Easy mode that makes the game ridiculously simple and lose yourself in some classic old-school action. Hard as nails but still incredibly satisfying.

82%

VANDAL HEARTS: FLAMES OF JUDGMENT GAME

Flaming good fun

Publisher Konami Developer Hijinx Studios Price £7.99 Players 1 Genre Strategy RPG

GET PAST THE ugly visual style of this reworked Konami classic and you'll discover a compelling strategy title. Granted, there aren't any revolutionary additions to the SRPG genre here, but you will find a hugely entertaining romp, even if the story and characters feel painfully familiar to you.



Fairly large for a PSN title and with plenty of customisation and character exploration, *Flames Of Judgment* is a solid addition to the classic franchise and is just crying out for a follow-up. It's not the prettiest game on PSN but it's certainly one of the best strategy titles currently available.

87%

HEAVY RAIN: CHRONICLE 1: THE TAXIDERMIST DLC

The nightmare continues...

Publisher Sony Online Entertainment Developer Quantic Dream Price £2.99 Players 1 Genre Adventure

It takes just 15 minutes to complete the first piece of *Heavy Rain* DLC. Worry not, though, for it is 15 of the most nerve-shattering minutes you'll ever likely witness in a videogame and, even now, we're still shaking just thinking about it.



Taking on the role of Madison, you're investigating a suspected serial killer and the whole section involves getting caught when he arrives home. Split into three distinct parts, allowing you to go back to any specific section whenever you fancy, this is a great piece of DLC that's extended thanks to the five alternate endings to discover. A brilliant start.

★★★★★

DANTE'S INFERNO: DARK FOREST DLC

If you go down to the woods today you'll have a rubbish surprise

Publisher Electronic Arts Developer Visceral Games Price £3.99 Players 1 Genre Adventure

DON'T BE FOOLED by the low price and the promise of a new level, for *Dark*



Forest is a sorry addition to *Dante's Inferno*.

Featuring two new monsters (which are nothing more than skins of previous foes) that are repeated ad nauseam, *Dark Forest* is nothing more than a series of boring battles that do little to add to the enjoyable main storyline. The addition of the nutty new disco costume is rather fun, but the dull combat, extremely basic puzzles and its overall shortness will mean that you'll soon be lamenting spending even four pounds on it. Disappointing.

★★★★★

WAKEBOARDING HD GAME

The price isn't right

Publisher Creat Studios Developer Tik Games Price £11.99 Players 1 Genre Sports

ARE THERE ANY actual fans of wakeboarding any more? We'll admit to being rather nonplussed by the actual sport, but this PlayStation Network translation is good, if ridiculously expensive fun. It all looks rather nice with its extremely convincing water physics and it offers 20 different challenges, but it's let down by an insanely expensive price tag. The price is a real problem, as spongy controls, laggy online play and the fact that the entire thing can be finished in a couple of hours means that *Wakeboarding HD* just doesn't offer decent value for money compared to most other PSN games.



65%

PEGGLE NIGHTS GAME

Prepare for plenty of sleepless nights

Publisher PopCap Games Developer In-House Price £3.19 Players 1-4 Genre Puzzle

OH PEGGLE; FOREVER we'll be held under your addictive spell. After being blown away by the



addictive *Peggle*, PopCap has now ensnared us with this truly fantastic piece of DLC.

Massive in size (it actually has more levels than the main game), *Peggle Nights* introduces a brand-new Peggle Master, features new shot types and is just as fun/maddening as the original. It's also available at a truly fantastic price. Granted, it's extremely similar to the original game and doesn't offer much of an upgrade, but when the original was so amazing it doesn't really matter. An essential add-on.

★★★★★

Including: Ten Of The Best... Potential Jedi/Sith /// The Play Quiz /// Guilty Pleasures

Ten of the best...

...Potential Jedi/Sith

There are many known, loveable characters in Star Wars. But who from the gaming world would be an ideal Force-wielder in the galaxy (that's far, far away)?



Cole MacGrath
inFamous

He's a pretty obvious choice, as not only does Cole shoot magical lightning from his fingers, but he has a choice between being a goody-goody and a bit of an evil bugger. Basically, he's a Force-wielder in disguise and would fit in very easily to the *Star Wars* world. Just about.



Alex Mercer
Prototype

You can't include Cole MacGrath on any list and not have Alex Mercer on there as well. Unless the list is 'characters who were in *inFamous*', in which case you can. Anyway, Alex is a little more naughty than Cole, but equally as superpowered and he already wears a Jedi-ish hood. Sorted.



Sephiroth
Final Fantasy VII

Score one for the dark side, as *Final Fantasy VII*'s antagonist Sephiroth would quite clearly make his home on whichever increment of the Death Star the Empire was up to at that point. Sephiroth can be a bit of an evil git and is more than capable of Forcey things such as flying and magic.



Subject Delta
BioShock 2

A morally confused individual, unsure of his past, bewildered by his present and none the wiser about his future. Oh, and he can *shoot bees from his hand*. Basically, Subject Delta is pretty much Luke Skywalker, except a little tall to be a Stormtrooper and more likely to shoot you in the face.



Bayonetta
Bayonetta

In modern times she is both shunned and hunted for being a witch. A long time ago (in a galaxy far, far away) Bayonetta would be held in the highest esteem as a Force-wielder of great potential. It's hard to see if she'd be of the light or dark persuasion, though, regardless of her choice of outfit.



Rico Rodriguez
Just Cause 2

Were Rico Rodriguez to actually exist in real life, in real-life situations with real-life limitations on what he could do, the fact that he could do what he is able to do in *Just Cause 2* would mean we saw him as a magical being. Do you see what we mean? Therefore, he would be a great Jedi.



Kratos
God Of War III

This has to be the Kratos of the third game, as the one from the first two is too single-minded. The third iteration of the Spartan is conflicted and confused, as well as having the potential for redemption in a very Darth Vadery way. As for his powers? Well, imagine how he'd handle a Lightsaber.



Eddie Riggs
Brütal Legend

We're not exactly sure how an electric guitar would transpose itself from the world of *Brütal Legend* to that of *Star Wars*, but there's no arguing with the powers Eddie Riggs wields. Melting faces? It's a dark side speciality, surely? And it's always good to have a little bit of comedy with your Jedi-ing.



The Prince
Katamari Damacy

This is less for the powers that The Prince holds – they're more down to a sticky ball than anything else – and more for his headgear. His bog-standard hat/head/hair thing is just like Princess Leia's, and as anyone who read the Expanded Universe knows, Leia is Force-sensitive. LOGIC.



Optimus Prime
Transformers

Because the light side of the Force would be immeasurably boosted by the addition of the mighty Optimus Prime to their ranks. He's even more benevolent than Yoda and Obi-Wan Kenobi put together, and as for powers? Well, he can turn into a truck. Let's see other Jedi do that.

GAME unDer Stock photography, fictitious stories, real lives...



It was my birthday this month, meaning I'm one year older than I was last year!



A lot of people complain about ageing, but I don't mind!



I mean, sure, I ache more when I move and I complain that things don't cost the same as they used to, but it's no big deal!



And, of course, I am one year closer to death, but it doesn't get me down!

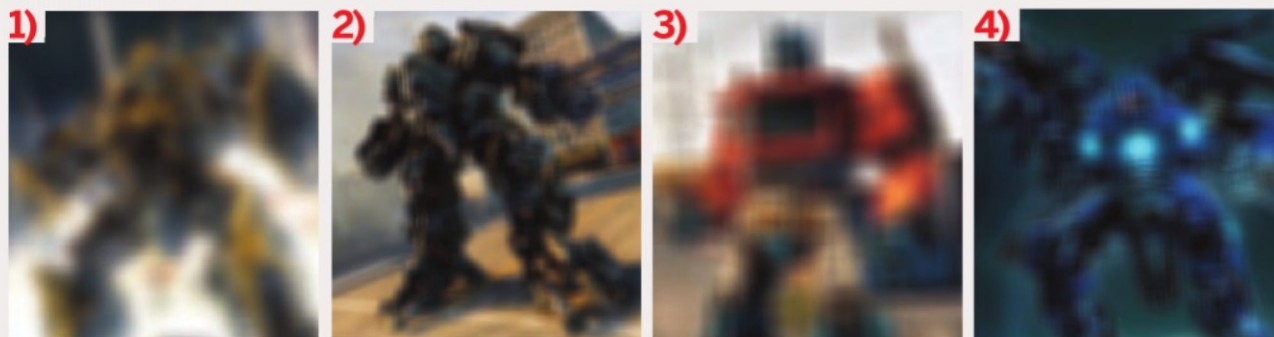


... sigh.

It's the PlayStation quiz so hard that even the Play team can't do it, and they made it in the first place. Good luck, you'll need it...

Let's get quizzical!

More than meets the eye? Or just a bunch of blurred-out Transformers for you to identify for some sweet quiz points? You decide:



FIFA World Cup 2010 was reviewed earlier in the mag, so we thought we should probably test your World Cup knowledge, just to be sure:

- 5) Who won the first World Cup?
- 6) Which team has won the most World Cups?
- 7) Who is the all-time top scorer in World Cup finals?
- 8) How many tournaments have England qualified for?
- 9) How many FIFA World Cup games have there been from EA Sports?
- 10) Who are the lowest-ranked team in this year's World Cup?



We've gone a little bit Star Wars mental this month, so what could be better than to have some Star Wars questions (and they say originality is dead...):

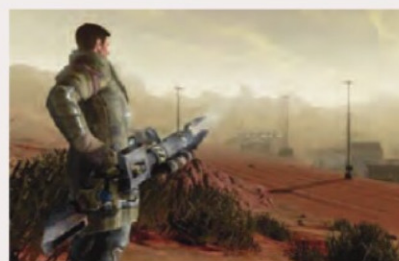
So how did you do in our world-famous **Play** quiz? To those of you who cheated, we've been watching you, and we're not impressed.

Answers on page 103

- 11) What is *The Force Unleashed's* Apprentice actually (apparently) called?
- 12) What species is Yoda?
- 13) Which awful *Star Wars* game did we give an astonishingly high 77% to in issue 13?
- 14) What year did *Jedi Starfighter* come out on PS2?
- 15) What is the name of the protagonist of *Star Wars: Dark Forces*?

3D Dot Game Heroes is about a world that goes 2D to 3D, so let's ask some questions about games that went from 2D to 3D, or even the other way:

- 16) Which was the last 'main' *Final Fantasy* game to be presented in 2D?
- 17) Why does the king in *3D Dot Game Heroes* turn the world into three dimensions?



- 18) *Virtua Fighter* has always been in 3D, except for one iteration. What console was this 2D version released on?
- 19) Which squirmy game of warfare had a go at 3D before reverting to 2D on its PlayStation Network release?
- 20) The jump between *Red Faction 2* and *RF: Guerrilla* wasn't 2D to 3D, but it was...?



GUILTY PLEASURES

A look back at a bygone age when men were men and games were art. Possibly



Gladius

Roman SRPG you say? Sign us up!

Format: **PS2** Released: **November 2003** Reviewed: **109** Score: **58%**

WE DIDN'T LIKE *Gladius* too much around these parts when it was released, but it always was a game that divided opinion. Well, it would have been, had it actually sold more than about three copies. Outside of **Play** (yes, it does exist) the game scored quite well, but the PlayStation 2 version was a bit of a letdown, admittedly. Nevertheless, it didn't stop you from getting any enjoyment out of this strategy RPG set during Roman times – and from a time when LucasArts made games outside of the *Star Wars* branding.

The game played in a pretty typical tile-based SRPG setup, with players able to move square by square in gladiatorial battles against numerous different enemy types. The strategy in battle wasn't always perfect and was open to exploitation, but the simple rock, paper, scissors approach was generally useful and served its purpose well enough. The swing meters, however, brought a great deal more skill and technique to a game otherwise stuck in its decidedly average ways. It was another simple addition – press a button in time, or a sequence of buttons in time and you will hit harder, or even attack with a combo. It meant there was always an element of skill in what you were doing, which is something so many SRPGs – even the great ones – don't include. Things were more open to chance and a lucky, or skilful, attack could turn the tide of battle.

Ignoring the score, it's easy to see why LucasArts moved away from other franchises – *Gladius* sold a pitiful amount of copies, meaning it wasn't financially viable to continue the series. This, along with games like *Armed And Dangerous* under performing at retail surely contributed to the current policy of the company. For that reason, it's hard to feel too guilty about being one of the very few who actually bought *Gladius*.

Gladius can be snapped up for about a tenner, so go wild.

2010 FIFA World Cup

STRUGGLING TO RISE THROUGH THE RANKS DURING THE 'CAPTAIN YOUR COUNTRY' CAMPAIGN? USE THESE TIPS TO HONE YOUR SKILLS AND IMPRESS YOUR WAY INTO THE STARTING 11...

Details

Publisher EA Sports **Developer** EA Canada **Price** £49.99 **Players** 1-20
Genre Sports **Age Rating** 3 **Website** fifa-world-cup.easports.com

CAPTAIN YOUR COUNTRY

In this mode you'll create your own player and place them in a team of your choosing. Working through a career from qualifying to the World Cup finals, you need to play as well as you can and impress your manager. Here are a few tips...



Mark a man Red circles will appear around some of the opposition, signalling that they should be marked. Hover around within the circle whenever a throw in or free kick is being taken to increase your points. The same can be said when the other team is in control of the ball, though it is considerably harder to stick to your position and man mark a player.

Remember your position While you may decide on a certain position during the character creation section, your manager could place you in a different spot for a match. Keep to your role whenever possible and watch the yellow arrows at your feet. These indicate where you should be and the longer you remain out of your area the more your score will drain.

Watch your tackles Be careful when using a sliding tackle, as missing will result in your score being lowered and more often than not it'll lead to a foul. Successfully using a sliding tackle to intercept a pass, however, will greatly boost your total. Taking the ball from the other team is the best thing you can do to regularly increase your score, so earn possession wherever you can.



SCORE FROM A FREE KICK

We highly recommend you practise in the training ground for a little while before trying a free kick in a match, since it's as much about luck as it is about precise ball control. Here are a few of our tips to help you along...



1. LINE UP THE SHOT

The ball will be kicked in a straight line, so point the camera in the general area of your shot. The best way of scoring is to direct the ball in between the wall and the keeper. Avoid trying to hit over the wall, as it won't work.



2. CONTROL YOUR POWER

Hold down the **○** button very briefly, trying to fill the bar slightly over the first black marker. Any more and the shot will be just too powerful and will fly well over the goal. Any less and the goalkeeper will easily get to it.



3. ADD SPIN

Push up on the left stick before you kick to add a dip to the ball. Once the shot is taken, move the stick left or right to add spin and try to curl it into the net. This is the best way to avoid the wall, but can be rather tricky to master.

COMPLETE VP CHALLENGES

Your Virtual Pro will have a list of challenges he can complete during a match, which can be accessed from the 'Career' section. Completing these doesn't directly affect your in-match points, but it does improve your player's stats and make you better at competing. Regularly check requirements left and try to earn them during a game.



Keep control When your side has the ball, line yourself up for a successful pass. Your team-mates will pass to you if they see an opportunity, so set yourself up and avoid losing control of it. Letting go of the ball will cause negative points, regardless of how briefly you touched it, so it's better to quickly kick it back to your team than to charge into a defensive wall.

Score a goal Naturally, scoring a goal is important for any team. Don't risk your total score by forcing your player to score, though. Where possible attempt a goal yourself, but otherwise setting up a team-mate will be just as beneficial. The easiest way to earn points is to dribble past the opposition and complete a pass to another player who then goes on to score.

BRING A FRIEND

Up to three friends can join in on 'Captain Your Country', and while they will be competing with you for top spot, if they're willing it can help increase your total. Have them set you up for passes and shots at goal and, if needs be, they can be the ones taking the negative points through dirty tackles, failed passes and fouls.



HOW TO GET... 9 BRONZE TROPHIES IN JUST THREE HOURS!

FIFA World Cup's Trophies are a varied bunch, with many requiring you to play online. For most, though, you need to play under specific conditions, so here are a few tips

PRACTICE PENALTY KICKS BRONZE

This can easily be earned as soon as you start the game. Go to the training ground and begin penalty practice. You don't even need to score goals for this Trophy to unlock, so it's up to you whether you play as the keeper or penalty taker. Just keep hitting them until the Trophy appears.



FIRST TEAM SELECTION BRONZE

You should have no problem getting this Trophy. You will need to play about five or six matches before you'll have gone up in the CYC ranking enough to be picked for the first team. Perform well enough in a match and your rank will move higher up the table.



EUROPE QUALIFIER BRONZE

There are five others matching this Trophy, too. Go into 'World Cup' mode from the main menu and select a team from the required continent. There are no stipulations about which, so choose a decent team, put the difficulty onto 'Amateur' and play through the game until you qualify.



DEFEND, DEFEND, DEFEND BRONZE

Start 'World Cup' mode in the Finals stage and pick your team. During all the matches, score no more than one goal then switch to 'Ultra Defensive'. Don't concede at all until, at the final, you aim to win. Always keep one goal ahead of the opposition, but only score if you're drawing or losing.



FAIR PLAY BRONZE

In 'Captain Your Country' mode, stick to only normal tackles and never use a sliding tackle. When displacing the ball from the opposition, you're not likely to receive a card if you end up fouling your opponents. Do this throughout the entire campaign and this will pop up at the end.



HOLD THE LINE BRONZE

Playing as a defender, it is harder to earn a rating of 8 since you don't get as many shots at goal. However, concentrate on tackling, since a successful one will raise your score by 0.2 each time. Once you achieve an 8 rating, stick to your position and don't let it fall.



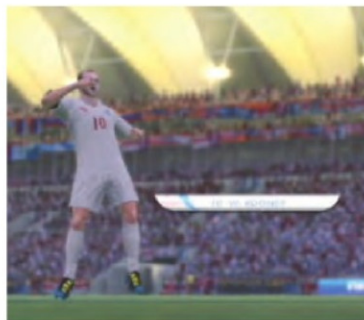
LIGHTNING QUICK STRIKE BRONZE

Once you've played through the 'World Cup' campaign, you'll have unlocked the finals to play through Kick Off in the main menu. Start a game through this on 'Amateur' difficulty, choosing to play as a five-star team against a half-star team. Once the match begins, charge forward and score an early goal.



MOST HAT-TRICKS BRONZE

You'll have three matches to score two hat-tricks in. You can't have just six goals spread across these games, since it has to be two official hat-tricks, in other words at least three goals in one match. All you can do is lower the difficulty to make scoring much easier and increase the length of each half to give you more time.



CO-OP SUCCESS BRONZE

In 'Captain Your Country' you can have four players play together. Make sure each player gets an early touch on the ball and their rating will immediately go up to 7.5. From there, it's just a case of maintaining the score together, making sure no one's rating drops below 7. This will pop up after the match is complete.



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An alternative opinion about great PlayStation games that doesn't ever reflect the views of Play magazine

それはどのようによかったか。

by Douglas Quaid

J'accuse!

RED FACTION SERIES

[THQ, PS2/PS3, 2001, 2002, 2009]

Get your ass to Mars? No

Total Recall has a lot to answer for. It may be a fantastic sci-fi movie and it may be seen as a classic to those of us at a certain age who grew up with it, but its influence meant the very first *Red Faction* game was made. I'm not complaining about the series taking influence from Verhoeven's movie – they did a good job of catching the atmosphere, at least in the first and third games.

No, I'm not happy with the endless broken promises of the series. From the very beginning we were promised a system that would change the very way we play games: Geo-Mod. We were promised we could make

our own routes through levels and make the experience as individual as it could be. Instead we got a few rocks you could blow up in the first game, seemingly less to blow up in the second and an almost-but-not-quite-there destruction mechanic in the third game. *Red Faction* is a series that has been a nearly ran from the very beginning.

But this isn't as negative as some of my fellow contributors have been in J'accuse and that's because I have a lot of respect for the *Red Faction* series. But a combination of 'respect' and 'not being terrible' don't mean much in the cutthroat world of



Red Faction: Guerrilla – not quite there.

gaming, and we need more from the upcoming *Red Faction: Guerrilla 2* (or whatever they end up calling it).

We need the ability not just to destroy some rocks, or some buildings, but to blow up just about everything. The biggest failing of the third game was that players could no longer destroy terrain – it was magically immune to explosives. This needs to be sorted. As for the story? In the first game it was a forgettable take on *Total Recall* and in the third it was codswallop. In the



Red Faction 2: worse than the first.

back from the first one was just the icing on the awful, awful cake.

No, *Red Faction* is not a terrible series, but it has constantly failed to live up to expectations and as such should be shown as much scorn as those that have been completely terrible.

If we weren't made such heady promises by developers, publishers and PRs I might have been able to take all of the *Red Faction* games at face value. Unfortunately we were promised the world (well, Mars) and the ability to blow it up. I was let down.

Red Faction is a series that has been a nearly ran from the very beginning

second, though, is where it came to pieces. Nonsense about the Ultor Corporation, rebellions on earth, Jason Statham doing voice work – it was a great big pile of rubbish, if I'm brutally honest. The fact that the game itself seemed to take a step

Red Faction: underwhelming.



Quiz answers

- 1) Bumblebee
- 2) Ironhide
- 3) Optimus Prime
- 4) Soundwave
- 5) Uruguay
- 6) Brazil (five wins)
- 7) Ronaldo (Brazil, 15 goals)

- 8) 13 (failed three times)
- 9) Four
- 10) North Korea (91st)
- 11) Galen Marek
- 12) No idea. We've never been told
- 13) Masters Of Teras Kasi
- 14) 2002
- 15) Kyle Katarn

- 16) Final Fantasy VI (or III, if you like)
- 17) Tourism concerns
- 18) Sega Mega Drive (or Genesis, if you must)
- 19) Worms
- 20) First-person to third-person

Results:

Add up all of your correct answers from the Play Quiz then refer to this chart to determine which Jedi/Sith you are:

- 0) That one with the massive head from the prequel trilogy
- 1-5) Darth Maul
- 6-10) Mace Windu
- 11-15) Yoda
- 16-20) Darth Vader

PLAY#x PlayList

If you want to know what a game scored then these pages are for you

PLAY#x TOP FIVE STAR WARS CHARACTERS



top five KEITH HENNESSEY

- 1 Boba Fett
- 2 Luke Skywalker
- 3 Han Solo
- 4 Darth Maul
- 5 Admiral Ackbar

top five GAVIN MACKENZIE

- 1 R2-D2
- 2 Darth Vader
- 3 C3PO
- 4 Chewbacca
- 5 Pizza The Hut

top five JON GORDON

- 1 HK-47
- 2 Admiral Ackbar
- 3 Chewbacca
- 4 Aayla Secura
- 5 Kit Fisto

top five IAN DRANSFIELD

- 1 Admiral Ackbar
- 2 Darth Vader
- 3 Han Solo
- 4 Salacious Crumb
- 5 Kyle Katarn

top five ALI INNES

- 1 Yoda (from the original films)
- 2 Anakin Skywalker
- 3 Padmé Amidala
- 4 Princess Leia
- 5 Palpatine

top five DAN PEEL

- 1 Han Solo
- 2 Chewbacca
- 3 Darth Vader
- 4 Luke Skywalker
- 5 R2-D2

PS3 LISTING

game	issue	score
50 Cent: Blood On The Sand	177	70%
Afro Samurai	177	61%
Agarest: Generations Of War	187	78%
Aliens Vs Predator	189	79%
Alone In The Dark	173	70%
Armored Core For Answer	173	65%
Armored Core 4	153	67%
Army Of Two	164	80%
Army Of Two: The 40th Day	188	65%
Ashes Cricket 2009	183	30%
Assassin's Creed	161	58%
Assassin's Creed II	186	89%
Band Hero	187	68%
Batman: Arkham Asylum	183	85%
Battle Fantasia	176	67%
Battlefield: Bad Company	168	78%
Battlefield: Bad Company 2	190	93%
Single-player is fairly impressive but take it online and it's bordering on genius. This is quite possibly the best shooter on PS3 today.		
Bayonetta*	187	93%
The most over-the-top, inventive, consistently thrilling, overtly sexual, guiltily enjoyable Japanese action game we've played in years.		
Beijing 2008	168	54%
Beowulf	161	61%
Bionic Commando	179	82%
BioShock	172	93%
This FPS-adventure hybrid has been admirably translated to the PS3. The most atmospheric game of our time.		
BioShock 2	189	88%
BlackSite	163	43%
Bladestorm: The Hundred Years' War	160	58%
BlazBlue: Calamity Trigger	190	85%
Blazing Angels	151	54%
Blitz: The League II	172	67%
Borderlands	185	80%
Brothers In Arms: Hell's Highway	171	75%
Brütal Legend	185	79%
Burnout Paradise	162	74%
Buzz!: Quiz TV	168	82%
Buzz! Quiz World	185	70%
Call Of Duty 3	151	77%
Call Of Duty: World At War	173	68%
Call Of Duty 4: Modern Warfare	160	88%
Call Of Juarez: Bound In Blood	181	85%
Chronicles Of Riddick: Assault On Dark Athena	178	87%
Civilization Revolution	168	90%
Clive Barker's Jericho	159	84%
Colin McRae: DiRT	158	91%
Colin McRae: DiRT 2	184	87%
Command & Conquer: Red Alert 3	178	65%
Conan	160	71%
Condemned 2	165	78%
Conflict: Denied Ops	164	50%
Cross Edge	182	59%
Damnation	181	38%
Dante's Inferno	189	80%
Dark Sector	165	62%
Dark Void	188	81%
Darksiders	188	83%
Dead Space	172	87%
Demon's Souls	182	91%
Def Jam: Icon	151	79%
Destroy All Humans!: Path Of The Furon	178	29%
Devil May Cry 4	163	89%
Disgaea 3: Absence Of Justice	175	81%
DJ Hero	186	91%

game	issue	score
Dragon Age: Origins	186	82%
Dragon Ball: Raging Blast	186	40%
Dragon Ball Z: Burst Limit	168	61%
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam	160	40%
Dynasty Warriors Gundam 2	176	43%
Dynasty Warriors: Strikeforce	189	37%
Dynasty Warriors 6	164	30%
Dynasty Warriors 6: Empires	181	44%
Eat Lead	178	38%
Enchanted Arms	152	69%
Enemy Territory: Quake Wars	168	60%
Eternal Sonata	176	87%
Everybody's Golf 5*	158	88%
Everybody's Golf: World Tour	165	91%
Eye Of Judgment	159	65%
EyePet	185	83%
FaceBreaker	170	55%
Fairytale Fights	186	51%
Fallout 3	173	97%
Fallout 3 lives up to its promise and then some. It's a damning portrayal of the consequences of war, and a compelling RPG experience.		
Fantastic Four: Rise Of The Silver Surfer	155	39%
Far Cry 2	172	74%
F.E.A.R.	151	81%
F.E.A.R. 2: Project Origin	176	87%
FIFA 08	159	84%
FIFA 09	171	87%
FIFA 10	184	90%
The best football game made marginally better. The crown held by PES seems like so long ago now.		
FIFA Street 3	163	66%
Fight Night Round 3	151	87%
Fight Night Round 4	181	84%
Final Fantasy XIII	190	85%
Folklore	158	66%
Formula One Championship Edition	151	72%
Fracture	171	72%
Fuel	180	49%
Full Auto 2: Battlelines	151	69%
G-Force	183	59%
Genji: Days Of The Blade	151	38%
Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2	157	83%
Ghostbusters: The Videogame	180	80%
Gl Joe	183	22%
God Of War Collection*	188	93%
God Of War III	190	88%
Gran Turismo 5 Prologue	165	75%
Grand Theft Auto IV	166	98%
If you haven't already bought it, then stop reading this box, put your shoes on and go out and get it! The best game ever? Probably.		
GTA: Episodes From Liberty City	191	94%
Two fine expansions bundled together and without the need for GTA IV to play them. What more could you want.		
Guitar Hero III	160	90%
Guitar Hero 5	184	81%
Guitar Hero: Aerosmith	168	63%
Guitar Hero Greatest Hits	182	76%
Guitar Hero Metallica	179	88%
Guitar Hero: Van Halen	189	65%
Guitar Hero World Tour	173	95%
World Tour just about manages to trump rival Rock Band with its entertaining music-creation tools, and quality peripherals.		
Harry Potter And The Half-Blood Prince	182	60%
Harry Potter: The Order Of The Phoenix	155	32%
Haze	167	64%
Heavenly Sword	157	71%
Heavy Rain	189	94%
Heroes Over Europe	184	48%

game	issue	score
Ice Age 3: Dawn Of The Dinosaurs	182	47%
IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds Of Prey	183	72%
inFamous	180	81%
Iron Man	166	58%
Jak And Daxter: The Lost Frontier	187	59%
James Cameron's Avatar: The Game	187	64%
Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights	159	78%
Just Cause 2	190	87%
Kane & Lynch: Dead Men	160	73%
Katamari Forever	184	88%
Killzone 2	176	93%
Sony has proven that it has a PlayStation platform capable of supporting a truly world-class FPS. Best graphics ever.		
Lair	158	52%
Last Rebellion	191	42%
Legend Of Spyro: Dawn Of The Dragon	174	54%
Legendary	173	62%
Lego Batman	173	65%
Lego Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures	167	73%
Lego Indiana Jones 2: The Adventure Continues	187	71%
Lego Rock Band	187	75%
Lego Star Wars: The Complete Saga	160	76%
Leisure Suit Larry: Box Office Bust	180	24%
LittleBigPlanet	172	94%
Create, share and play. Sackboy heads up Media Molecule's highly customisable and adorable platformer.		
Lost Planet: Extreme Condition	163	69%
Lost: The Video Game	164	38%
LOTR: Conquest	175	52%
Madden NFL 07	151	82%
Madden NFL 08	157	82%
Madden NFL 09	170	83%
Madden NFL 10	184	82%
MAG	189	68%
Marvel Ultimate Alliance	151	64%
Marvel Ultimate Alliance 2	185	57%
Medal Of Honor Airborne	161	85%
Mercenaries 2: World In Flames	171	78%
Metal Gear Solid 4	167	92%
Not the final Metal Gear Solid game after all then. Still brilliant though, and still largely incomprehensible.		
Mobile Suit Gundam: Crossfire	151	37%
Modern Warfare 2	186	94%
A questionable single-player mode is rendered null and void by the best multiplayer we've ever played.		
Midnight Club: Los Angeles	173	84%
Mini Ninjas	184	80%
Mirror's Edge	173	71%
Monster Madness	170	78%
Mortal Kombat vs DC Universe	173	68%
MotoGP 08	172	65%
MotoGP 09/10	190	77%
MotorStorm	151	92%
MotorStorm: Pacific Rift	172	93%
With its balls strapped firmly to the wall, Pacific Rift amplifies the drama of the original to create the PS3's best racing title.		
MX Vs ATV Reflex	189	68%
MX Vs ATV Untamed	164	58%
Naruto: Ultimate Ninja Storm	174	59%
NASCAR 08	157	38%
NBA 07	153	33%
NBA 2K7	151	76%
NBA 2K8	172	71%
NBA 2K10	186	79%
NBA Live 08	158	59%
NBA Live 09	170	81%
NBA Street: Homecourt	151	68%

This month's new entries

The newest games, freshly squeezed among all your old favourites

Super Street Fighter IV PS3	90%	Dante's Inferno PSP	76%
GTA: Episodes From Liberty City PS3	94%	The Eye Of Judgment: Legends PSP	57%
Yakuza 3 PS3	80%	echoshift PSP	73%
Resonance Of Fate PS3	79%	Switchball PSN	75%
Prison Break: The Conspiracy PS3	40%	Revenge Of The Wounded Dragons PSN	60%
Last Rebellion PS3	42%	Greed Corp PSN	75%
Half-Minute Hero PSP	87%		

game	issue	score
Need For Speed Carbon	151	76%
Need For Speed ProStreet	161	86%
Need For Speed Shift	184	81%
Need For Speed Undercover	173	75%
NHL 2K7	151	80%
NHL 2K9	172	67%
NHL 2K10	186	70%
NHL 09	170	88%
NHL 10	184	85%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma	154	88%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2	184	82%
Operation Flashpoint: Dragon Rising	185	78%
Overlord: Raising Hell	167	65%
Overlord II	181	68%
Pain	183	69%
PES 2008	159	70%
PES 2009	172	80%
PES 2010	185	72%
PixelJunk Racers	160	74%
POTC: At World's End	154	48%
Prince Of Persia	174	83%
Prison Break: The Conspiracy	191	40%
Prototype	181	76%
Pure	171	80%
Quantum Of Solace	175	57%
Race Driver: GRID	167	85%
Rainbow Six Vegas	155	88%
Rainbow Six Vegas 2	164	78%
Ratchet & Clank: A Crack In Time	186	82%
Ratchet & Clank: Tools Of Destruction	160	72%
Red Faction: Guerrilla	180	80%
Resident Evil 5	177	86%
Resident Evil 5: Gold Edition	190	86%
Resistance: Fall Of Man	151	83%
Resistance 2	173	90%
 With its impressive set pieces and glorious multiplayer mode, <i>Resistance 2</i> is one of the best FPSs on the PS3.		
Resonance Of Fate	191	79%
Ridge Racer 7	151	75%
Rise Of The Argonauts	176	58%
Rock Band	169	94%
Rock Band 2	179	96%
 With the incredible tracklist, tweaked engine, and new modes, this is easily the best rhythm-action game currently available.		
Rogue Warrior	188	09%
Sacred 2: Fallen Angel	180	76%
Saints Row 2	172	79%
Saw	186	52%
Sega Mega Drive Ultimate Collection	177	85%
SBK 08	172	55%
Sega Rally	158	92%
 Simply the best rally game on the PS3. Unless simulation is your bag then you'll want to go for <i>Colin McRae</i>. Not much in it, really.		
Sega Superstars Tennis	165	68%
Shaun White Snowboarding	173	72%
Shellshock 2: Blood Trails	177	32%
Silent Hill: Homecoming	174	64%
Simpsons Game	160	82%
SingStar	159	80%
SingStar Pop Edition	179	81%
Skate	159	86%
Skate 2	175	82%
Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing	190	78%
Sonic The Hedgehog	151	52%
Sonic Unleashed	175	48%
Soul Calibur IV	169	94%
 Even the gimmicky appearance of Darth Vader can't spoil <i>Soul Calibur IV</i>. Another wonderful addition to the franchise.		
Spider-Man 3	155	33%

game	issue	score
Spider-Man: Web Of Shadows	173	55%
Splinter Cell Double Agent	153	79%
Star Ocean: The Last Hope International	190	63%
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed	171	65%
Stormrise	178	51%
Stranglehold	159	65%
Street Fighter IV	176	95%
 The best beat-'em-up on the PS3, probably the best beat-'em-up ever, and maybe even the best game ever. Our poor little thumbs.		
Stuntman: Ignition	157	82%
SuperCar Challenge	183	66%
Superstars V8: Next Challenge	190	55%
Superstars V8 Racing	181	63%
Super Street Fighter IV	191	90%
 The fact that you're buying a lot of stuff you've probably bought already is the only drawback to what is the best fighter ever made.		
Tekken 6	184	94%
 There are flaws that hurt the experience, but nothing, <i>nothing</i>, stops <i>Tekken 6</i> from being an intense, tactical and brilliant fighting game.		
The Beatles: Rock Band	184	96%
 It's a gorgeous game that'll make Beatles fans feel like they're being swaddled in a veil of pure joy. A breathtaking product.		
The Bourne Conspiracy	168	72%
The Club	163	80%
The Darkness	154	91%
The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion	152	91%
 This proves once and for all that Western RPGs are better than Japanese ones! Sort of. Whatever, <i>Oblivion</i> is an awesome game.		
The Godfather	151	37%
The Godfather II	178	38%
The Golden Compass	162	32%
The Incredible Hulk	168	52%
The King Of Fighters XII	182	82%
The Orange Box	161	93%
 Five brilliant games for the price of one, what on Earth could be better than that? Nothing, that's what. <i>Absolutely nothing</i>.		
The Saboteur	187	67%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 07	151	88%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 08	158	73%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 09	171	86%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10	181	69%
Time Crisis 4	166	69%
TimeShift	162	72%
TNA Impact!	171	71%
Tom Clancy's EndWar	173	80%
Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X	177	75%
Tomb Raider: Underworld	173	83%
Tony Hawk's Project 8	151	85%
Tony Hawk's Proving Ground	160	72%
Tony Hawk: Ride	188	52%
Top Spin 3	168	71%
Tornado Outbreak	186	56%
Transformers: Revenge Of The Fallen	182	41%
Transformers: The Game	156	34%
Turning Point: Fall Of Liberty	165	40%
Turok	163	46%
UEFA EURO 2008	165	62%
UFC Undisputed 2009	180	90%
Uncharted: Drake's Fortune	161	87%
Uncharted 2: Among Thieves	185	96%
 <i>Among Thieves</i> has proven itself to be a real work of class. It's one of the best games in recent years.		
Unreal Tournament III	162	88%
Untold Legends: Dark Kingdom	151	54%
Valkyria Chronicles	173	82%
Vancouver 2010	189	76%

game	issue	score
Viking: Battle For Asgard	165	74%
Virtua Fighter 5	151	83%
Virtua Tennis 2009	180	80%
Virtua Tennis 3	150	91%
 Pick-up-and-play gameplay strikes another blow, proving that the PS3 is currently at its best when it keeps it simple.		
Wanted: Weapons Of Fate	179	63%
Warhawk	157	84%
Watchmen: The End Is Nigh	183	55%
Way Of The Samurai 3	190	16%
Wet	184	41%
Wheelman	178	72%
Where The Wild Things Are	188	56%
White Knight Chronicles	190	55%
Wolfenstein	183	72%
World Snooker Championship 2007	151	56%
WSC REAL 09: World Snooker Championship	177	67%
WWE Legends Of Wrestlemania	178	80%
WWE SmackDown Vs. Raw 2008	159	88%
WWE SmackDown Vs. Raw 2009	173	74%
WWE SmackDown Vs. Raw 2010	185	77%
Yakuza 3	191	80%
X-Blades	178	54%
X-Men Origins: Wolverine	179	71%
Yakuza 3	191	80%

PS STORE LISTING

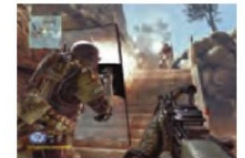


game	issue	score
1942: Joint Strike	170	74%
3-On-3 NHL Arcade	177	62%
Age Of Booty	172	81%
Battlefield 1943	182	89%
Bishi Bashi Special!	175	61%
Bionic Commando Rearmed	169	88%
Blast Factor	152	72%
Blue Toad Murder Files: The Mysteries Of Little Riddle Episode I	188	65%
Blue Toad Murder Files: The Mysteries Of Little Riddle Episode II	188	61%
Bombberman Ultra	185	82%
Braid	188	93%
 We had to wait quite a while, but time is what we have plenty of both with and for <i>Braid</i>. Simply brilliant.		
Burn Zombie Burn	178	85%
Call Of Duty Classic	188	90%
Calling All Cars	155	81%
Comet Crash	186	84%
Command & Conquer: Red Alert	168	70%
Command & Conquer Red Alert: Retaliation	176	55%
Command & Conquer Red Alert 3: Commander's Challenge	185	68%
Command & Conquer	175	44%
Cool Boarders	173	57%
Cool Boarders 2	175	31%
Crash Bandicoot	172	77%
Crash Bandicoot 3: Warped	174	82%
Crash Commando	174	80%
Crash Team Racing	170	79%
Critter Crunch	188	91%
Crystal Defenders	184	48%
Dark Mist	164	53%
Destruction Derby	01	80%
detuned	186	50%
Digger HD	186	52%
Diner Dash	190	66%
Driver	171	90%
 With the most cinematic car chases ever seen in a game, <i>Driver</i> made a huge impact in 1998. Despite rosey graphics, it's still a playable title.		

*denotes import review

PS3 top fives

top five FPS



- 1 Modern Warfare 2
- 2 The Orange Box
- 3 Killzone 2
- 4 Unreal Tournament III
- 5 Call Of Duty 4: Modern Warfare

top five RACING



- 1 MotorStorm: Pacific Rift
- 2 Sega Rally
- 3 Colin McRae: DIRT
- 4 Colin McRae: DIRT 2
- 5 Need For Speed ProStreet

top five SPORTS



- 1 Virtua Tennis 3
- 2 FIFA 10
- 3 Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2007
- 4 Fight Night Round 3
- 5 Everybody's Golf World Tour

top five ADVENTURE



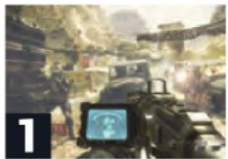
- 1 Grand Theft Auto IV
- 2 Uncharted 2: Among Thieves
- 3 Assassin's Creed II
- 4 God Of War III
- 5 Metal Gear Solid 4

top five SHOOT-'EM-UP



- 1 The Club
- 2 GRAW 2
- 3 Super Stardust HD
- 4 Everyday Shooter
- 5 Kane & Lynch: Dead Men

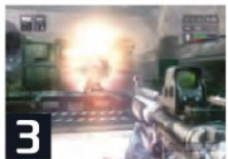
TOP TEN NETWORK GAMES



1 Modern Warfare 2



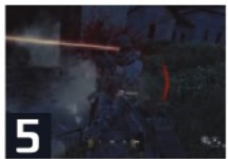
2 LittleBigPlanet



3 Killzone 2



4 Unreal Tournament III



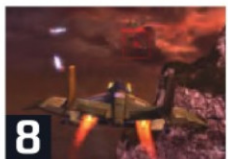
5 Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare



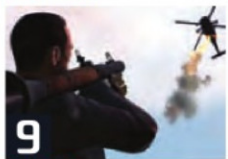
6 Uncharted 2: Among Thieves



7 MotorStorm: Pacific Rift



8 Warhawk



9 GTA IV



10 Street Fighter IV

game	issue	score
Droplitz	184	91%
echochrome	169	85%
Elefunk	170	45%
Everybody's Golf 2	62	83%
Fade To Black	09	44%
Fat Princess	183	65%
Fatal Inertia EX	168	65%
FIFA 09 Ultimate Team	178	61%
Final Fantasy VII	181	96%
Even after all these years it still holds up. In fact, our mark seems to have gone up 3% since 1997.		
Final Fantasy VIII	190	90%
Flock!	179	70%
fiOw	151	90%
Flower	176	85%
Frogger Returns	190	35%
G-Police	27	84%
Geon	175	71%
Go! Puzzle	152	58%
Gran Turismo HD	150	75%
Gravity Crash	187	85%
Greed Corp	191	75%
GTI Club+	174	72%
Gunstar Heroes	181	85%
Hardcore 4x4	15	81%
Hasbro Family Game Night	187	60%
Heavy Weapon	187	75%
High Velocity Bowling	163	50%
Hi-Octane	178	64%
Hustle Kings	190	87%
Hyperballoid HD	188	70%
Inferno Pool	181	81%
International Track & Field	171	80%
Interpol: The Trail Of Doctor Chaos	185	48%
Invincible Tiger: The Legend Of Han Tao	185	70%
Jet Rider 2	176	71%
Judge Dredd	18	19%
Jumping Flash	172	55%
Kula World	172	71%
Lemmings	151	79%
Linger In Shadows	173	69%
LocoRoco Cocoreccho!	159	80%
Lumines Supernova	178	90%
Probably the best puzzle game on the PSN, which is saying something because there's loads of competition.		
Madden NFL Arcade	188	58%
Magic Carpet	179	65%
Marvel Vs Capcom 2	182	90%
Matt Hazard: Blood Bath And Beyond	189	69%
MediEvil	173	45%
Mega Man 9	172	75%
Metal Gear Solid	187	93%
While it looks rather rough now, the game itself remains a real high point in the franchise. Simply essential.		
Metal Gear Solid Online	175	45%
Motorhead	173	60%
Noby Noby Boy	177	85%
Nucleus	155	82%
Numblast	183	60%
N20	37	70%
OutRun Online Arcade	180	80%
Pain	183	69%
Peggle	189	94%
So addictive it should come with some sort of government warning. Terrific value for money and a superb little puzzle game.		
PixelJunk Eden	169	67%
PixelJunk Monsters	163	94%
The second game in the PixelJunk series is great fun and brilliantly addictive. Buy it and play it constantly for hours on end!		
PixelJunk Shooter	187	93%
Q-Games delivers excellence on the PSN once again with its PixelJunk series, this time in the form of a classic shoot-'em-up.		
Piyotama	162	62%
Polar Panic	190	65%

game	issue	score
Populous: The Beginning	46	70%
Prince Of Persia Classic	173	67%
Puzzle Quest Galactrix	181	68%
Q*bert	58	53%
Rag Doll Kung Fu: Fists Of Plastic	179	83%
Rampage: World Tour	29	77%
Ratchet & Clank: Quest For Booty	170	69%
Rayman	01	76%
Revenge Of The Wounded Dragons	191	60%
Riff: Everyday Shooter	162	86%
Rocketmen: Axis Of Evil	165	63%
Savage Moon	175	87%
Shatter	183	91%
Sheep	171	78%
Siren Blood Curse	170	62%
Smash Cars	184	50%
SOCOM Confrontation	178	55%
Spin Jam	174	32%
Syphon Filter	48	93%
Gabe Logan's gritty PSone adventure has shadowed all that came after. As always, the original really is best.		
Snakeball	176	92%
Star Trek: D-A-C	189	57%
Street Fighter Alpha: Warrior's Dream	159	57%
Street Skater 2	178	40%
Super Puzzle Fighter II HD Turbo Remix	168	78%
Super Rub-A-Dub	151	83%
Supersonic Acrobatic Rocket-Powered Battle-Cars	177	65%
Super Stardust HD	155	74%
Super Street Fighter II Turbo HD Remix	176	72%
Switchball	191	75%
Syphon Filter 3	170	80%
Tank Battles	186	68%
Tekken HD	150	80%
Tekken 5: Dark Resurrection Online	161	87%
The Last Guy	171	91%
Snake meets Pac-Man meets GoogleMaps. The Last Guy is yet another innovative and compelling addition to the PSN's line-up.		
The Punisher: No Mercy	182	49%
Theme Hospital	32	80%
Theme Park	174	80%
TMNT: Turtles in Time Re-shelled	186	57%
Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six	54	34%
Topotai: Spinning Through The Worlds	183	61%
ToyHome	162	31%
Trash Panic	181	79%
Trials Of Topaz	159	50%
Trine	184	85%
Uno	189	85%
Vagrant Story	189	82%
Warhawk: Operation Fallen Star	171	80%
Watchmen: The End Is Nigh	183	55%
Wipeout	01	89%
Wipeout HD	172	84%
Wolfenstein	181	70%
Worms	179	91%
Zuma	182	78%

PSP mini LISTING

Alien Havoc	186	68%
Bloons	186	65%
Brainpipe	186	70%
BreakQuest	186	45%
Field Runners	186	85%
Fortix	186	57%
Funky Punch	186	49%
Hero of Sparta	186	57%
Kahoots	186	88%
Pinball Fantasies	186	90%
Puzzle Scope	186	75%
Tetris	186	93%
How it is possible to make Tetris feel so fresh and so much fun again we don't know, but it's managed here.		
Vampire	186	67%

game	issue	score
300: March To Glory	152	59%
Ace Combat X	147	72%
After Burner: Black Falcon	152	82%
Ape Academy	134	44%
Ape Academy 2	145	52%
Ape Escape P	140	37%
Army Of Two: The 40th Day	190	45%
Assassin's Creed: Bloodlines	187	77%
Astonishia Story	142	68%
Beaterator	186	72%
Blade Dancer: Lineage Of Light	145	45%
Blood Bowl	184	53%
Bombberman	150	83%
Boulder Dash: Rocks!	165	69%
Breath Of Fire III	138	82%
Brothers In Arms: D-Day	149	69%
Burnout Dominator	153	65%
Burnout Legends	134	94%
Despite being more of a 'best of' than a completely new game, Legends is the best racing game on the PSP.		
Buzz! Brain Bender	175	68%
Capcom Classics Collection Reloaded	147	80%
Capcom Classics Collection Remixed	141	72%
Cars	143	60%
Castlevania: The Dracula X Chronicles	163	78%
Championship Manager	137	65%
Championship Manager 2006	140	32%
Cid The Dummy	180	32%
Coded Arms	134	53%
Call Of Duty: Roads To Victory	153	69%
Colin McRae Rally 2005 Plus	134	84%
Crisis Core - Final Fantasy VII	167	87%
Crush	154	80%
Dante's Inferno	191	76%
Disgaea: Afternoon Of Darkness	161	92%
An absolute must-have for RPG fans, and one of the best titles available on the PSP. A simply brilliant game.		
Dissidia: Final Fantasy	184	60%
Disgaea 2: Dark Hero Days	190	87%
Dragon Ball Z: Shin Budokai 2	154	50%
Driver 76	154	68%
Dungeons & Dragons: Tactics	159	55%
Dungeon Siege: Throne Of Agony	148	85%
Dynasty Warriors: Strikeforce	179	69%
EA Replay	147	74%
echochrome	169	85%
echoshift	191	73%
Everybody's Golf 2	167	86%
Every Extend Extra	145	84%
Exit	138	65%
F1 2009	187	66%
F1 Grand Prix	134	81%
Field Commander	145	83%
FIFA 06	136	43%
FIFA 07	147	81%
Fired Up	134	60%
Final Fantasy	164	63%
Final Fantasy Tactics	159	86%
FlatOut: Head On	164	79%
Football Manager 2007	147	62%
Football Manager Handheld	139	82%
Football Manager Handheld 2008	161	49%
Football Manager Handheld 2010	187	60%
Formula One 06	143	78%
Frantix	136	36%
Gangs Of London	144	65%
Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2	157	42%
Ghostbusters: The Video Game	188	55%
Gitaroo Man Lives!	144	79%
Go! Sudoku	137	45%
God Of War: Chains Of Olympus	165	84%

game	issue	score
Gradius Collection	144	80%
Gran Turismo	184	85%
Gripshift	136	81%
Grand Theft Auto: Chinatown Wars	185	95%
 Bar some combat control issues, <i>GTA: Chinatown Wars</i> has perfectly translated to the PSP. It's a must-have game.		
GTA: Liberty City Stories	135	95%
GTA: Vice City Stories	147	96%
 Improving on its predecessor in every way, the only way <i>Vice City Stories</i> could be topped is if <i>San Andreas</i> comes to the PSP.		
Half-Minute Hero	191	87%
Harry Potter And The Goblet Of Fire	136	69%
Hellboy: Science Of Evil	170	60%
Holy Invasion Of Privacy, Badman! What Did I Do To Deserve This?	186	73%
Hot Pixel	155	73%
Indiana Jones And The Staff Of Kings	181	60%
Infected	141	68%
Innocent Life: A Futuristic Harvest Moon	154	70%
International Athletics	170	40%
Invizimals	187	71%
Jak And Daxter: The Lost Frontier	187	59%
Juiced: Eliminator	141	70%
Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights	160	80%
Kao Challengers	137	60%
Killzone: Liberation	146	83%
Lemmings	138	63%
LittleBigPlanet	186	90%
 Refined in certain areas and slightly worse in Create mode but still a fantastic addition to PSP's lineup.		
LocoRoco	143	94%
 We called this the definitive PSP title in our review, and it is a game that no PSP owner should be without.		
LocoRoco 2	173	82%
LocoRoco Midnight Carnival	186	81%
Lumines II	137	74%
Madden NFL 06	137	74%
Marvel Trading Cards	155	38%
Me And My Katamari	138	86%
Medal Of Honor Heroes	147	72%
Medevil Resurrection	134	53%
Mercury Meltdown	145	66%
Metal Slug Anthology	150	91%
 We're not too clued up on retro games, but we do know our <i>Metal Slug</i> and the <i>Anthology</i> proves to be a great compilation.		
Metal Gear Acid 2	138	92%
 More excellent card-based espionage starring everyone's favourite mullet-head, with funky new cel-shaded graphics.		
Metal Gear Solid: Portable Ops	150	91%
Miami Vice	144	82%
Micro Machines V4	142	71%
Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition	134	57%
Monster Hunter Freedom	140	81%
Monster Hunter Freedom 2	157	59%
Monster Hunter Freedom Unite	181	77%
MotoGP	146	75%

game	issue	score
Motorstorm: Arctic Edge	184	72%
Mytran Wars	179	85%
Namco Museum Battle Collection	136	68%
Naruto Shippuden Legends: Akatsuki Rising	185	46%
Naruto Ultimate Ninja Heroes 2	169	46%
NBA Ballers: Rebound	139	61%
Need For Speed Undercover	175	57%
Need For Speed Most Wanted	136	73%
OutRun 2006: Coast 2 Coast	139	93%
PaRappa The Rapper	155	88%
Patapon	163	86%
Patapon 2	177	87%
Pirates Of The Caribbean	143	52%
PixelJunk Monster Deluxe	185	86%
Pro Evolution Soccer 2008	163	77%
Pocket Racers	144	49%
PoPoLoCroIS	142	71%
Power Stone Collection	145	88%
PQ - Practical Intelligence Quotient	141	52%
Prince Of Persia Revelations	138	69%
Prinny: Can I Really Be The Hero?	181	80%
PSN Collection: Power Pack	173	70%
PSN Collection: Puzzle Pack	173	54%
Pursuit Force	134	83%
Pursuit Force: Extreme Justice	159	76%
Puzzle Chronicles	190	61%
Puzzle Quest	153	66%
R-Type Tactics	170	74%
Rainbow Six Vegas	156	78%
Ratchet & Clank: Size Matters	154	78%
Rengoku 2	144	72%
Resistance: Retribution	177	76%
Ridge Racer 2	145	78%
Ridge Racer	132	91%
 Arguably the best launch game on the PSP, <i>Ridge Racer</i> still stands up as one of the finest racing games for the system.		
Rock Band Unplugged	181	92%
 <i>Unplugged</i> comes highly recommended. It's superb - there are few better rhythm-action games on the handheld.		
Rocky Balboa	150	68%
Secret Agent Clank	169	79%
Sega Mega Drive Collection	177	79%
Sega Rally	158	90%
Shinobido: Tales Of The Ninja	150	60%
Silent Hill Origins	160	87%
Silent Hill: Shattered Memories	190	52%
Smash Court Tennis	154	58%
SOCOM Fire Team 2	154	70%
SOCOM: Fireteam Bravo 3	190	71%
SOCOM: Tactical Strike	160	85%
SOCOM: US Navy SEALs Fireteam Bravo	140	69%
Sonic Rivals	147	70%
Sonic Rivals 2	162	35%
Soul Calibur: Broken Destiny	183	92%
 New modes and characters keep things interesting, while fights themselves are as hectic and solid as ever. A portable delight.		
Spider-Man 3	162	32%
Spinout	149	81%

game	issue	score
Splinter Cell: Essentials	139	71%
SSX On Tour	138	76%
Star Ocean: Second Evolution	178	78%
Star Trek: Tactical Assault	148	59%
Star Wars Battlefront II	137	74%
Star Wars Battlefront: Elite Squadron	187	65%
Star Wars: Lethal Alliance	148	69%
Star Wars: Renegade Squadron	160	78%
Street Fighter Alpha 3 Max	138	70%
Street Riders	140	29%
Super Monkey Ball Adventure	142	54%
Syphon Filter: Dark Mirror	140	90%
 In the absence of a 'real' <i>Metal Gear</i> game, it's left to Gabe Logan to carry the stealthy torch, and he does a fine job of it too.		
Syphon Filter: Logan's Shadow	161	84%
Tales Of Eternia	138	85%
Tales Of The World	158	56%
Taito Legends	145	64%
Tekken 6	187	90%
Tekken: Dark Resurrection	143	92%
 <i>Tekken: Dark Resurrection</i> is instantly playable and provides the PSP's first great brawler.		
Tenchu: Shadow Assassins	179	71%
Tenchu: Time Of The Assassins	146	51%
The Con	153	59%
The Cube	153	64%
The Eye Of Judgment: Legends	191	57%
The Godfather Mob Wars	136	66%
The Lord Of The Rings: Tactics	136	66%
The Sims 2	137	71%
TNA Impact! Cross The Line	189	58%
TOCA 3	152	70%
Tokobot	140	79%
Tomb Raider: Anniversary	156	81%
Tomb Raider: Legend	140	72%
Twisted Metal Head-On	134	54%
Ultimate Ghosts 'N Goblins	145	88%
Undead Knights	189	46%
Untold Legends: The Warrior's Code	140	59%
Valhalla Knights	158	49%
Valkyrie Profile: Lenneth	153	78%
Viewtiful Joe: Red Hot Rumble	140	82%
Virtua Tennis 3	152	88%
Warhammer 40,000: Squad Command	161	70%
WipEout Pulse	159	86%
WipEout Pure	138	91%
 Exceeding all of our expectations as to what a handheld <i>WipEout</i> game could be, <i>Pure</i> is an essential PSP purchase.		
World Of Pool	156	43%
World Tour Poker	141	67%
World Tour Soccer 2	142	40%
Worms: Open Warfare 2	157	80%
WWE SmackDown! vs. RAW 2006	137	84%
WWE SmackDown vs. RAW 2007	147	80%
World Rally Championship	134	67%

psp top fives

top five RACING



- 1 Burnout Legends
- 2 Gran Turismo
- 3 Ridge Racer
- 4 WipEout Pure
- 5 Sega Rally

top five SHOOT-'EM-UPS



- 1 Metal Gear Solid: Portable Ops
- 2 Syphon Filter: Dark Mirror
- 3 Pursuit Force
- 4 Miami Vice
- 5 Rainbow Six Vegas

top five SPORTS



- 1 Virtua Tennis 3
- 2 Everybody's Golf 2
- 3 FIFA 10
- 4 Football Manager Handheld
- 5 WWE SmackDown Vs Raw 2010

top five RPG



- 1 Disgaea: Afternoon Of Darkness
- 2 Crisis Core - Final Fantasy VII
- 3 Tales Of Eternia
- 4 Breath Of Fire 3
- 5 Valkyrie Profile

top five PLATFORM



- 1 LocoRoco
- 2 Metal Slug Anthology
- 3 LittleBigPlanet
- 4 Ultimate Ghosts 'N Goblins
- 5 Me And My Katamari

Play Book Club

Metal Gear Solid Omnibus

Author: Alex Garner • Price: £22.50

With *Peace Walker* mere months away we welcome the arrival of the *Metal Gear Solid Omnibus*. This enticing compendium brings together 24 *Metal Gear Solid* issues in one book spliced with the acclaimed artwork of Ashley Wood. Follow Solid Snake as he fights to save the world from destruction at the hands of Dead Cell.



The Art Of Uncharted 2: Among Thieves

Author: Daniel Wade • Price: £51.49

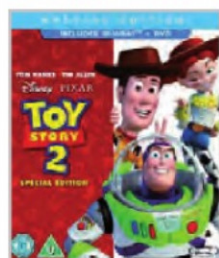
Just when you think you've played through *Uncharted* enough and seen everything there is to see, the art experts at Ballistic Publishing appear with this amazing 200-plus page book featuring art behind one of the greatest games ever made. Teaming up with Sony and Naughty Dog, Ballistic offers up a wealth of behind-the-scenes delights and talks to the key artists who created the stellar adventure game. An essential purchase.



*denotes import review



● A stunning high-definition transfer allows you to experience Pixar's world like never before.



Toy Story/Toy Story 2

Pixar's best franchise goes high-def

With *Toy Story 3* just around the cinematic corner, Disney has finally released Pixar's first two parts of the trilogy on Blu-ray. And what an amazing job it has done.

Disney animation always looks fantastic in HD and these are no exception. While the first film looks more basic due to limited textures and the technology of the time, its brilliant primary colours and detail still shine through. Its sequel is even more exquisite, taking full advantage of the enhanced technology that was available and delivering an amazing-looking living, breathing world. Supplementing

Even without the excellent extras and superlative aesthetics, *Toy Story 1* and *2* remain fantastic films. Walking that difficult line so that they appeal to both children and adults, they retread similar themes but offer such a rollercoaster ride of excitement that you'll end up watching them again and again.

Toy Story's premise may be nothing more than a mismatched buddy movie, but look beneath the CGI glitz and you'll find a surprisingly moving tale of friendship that feels far more mature than the audience it's so obviously created for. If you can watch the part where Woody shouts out: "To infinity and beyond" without your heart breaking, it's probably already stopped beating.

Toy Story 2 is the better film, however, which is saying something when you consider how essential *Toy Story* still is. Funnier, smarter and with truly gob-smacking visuals, it's a magnificent jaunt that sees Buzz and co going after Woody after he's been kidnapped by an evil toyshop owner. A few new additions to the main crew are introduced, such as Bullseye, Woody's pet horse, but this remains Woody and Buzz's show and it's all pulled together by a fantastic story and excellent voice acting.

Both movies will be the envy of your standard-definition friends

the astonishing visuals are two truly dynamic audio tracks that really bring Woody and Buzz's miniature world to life. These discs have demo material written all over them.

Both films are also loaded with a staggering array of extras, giving you a glimpse into every facet of each film's production. In short, if you've ever wondered how Pixar is able to turn a string of 1s and 0s into digital eye candy you need to watch these Blu-rays.



● Both films are superb, but if we had to choose a favourite it would definitely be *Toy Story 2*.

While it's somewhat perplexing that Disney hasn't released both films as a boxset – the cynic in us says this will change when *Toy Story 3* comes to Blu-ray – there's no denying that both discs are excellent value for money. Both titles are fantastic movies in their own right and are married to some truly stunning HD technology that will be the envy of any of your standard-def friends. It's what your PS3 and Blu-ray player were made for.

Darran Jones

VERDICT

Both movies look and sound incredible, are loaded with genuinely excellent extras and, most importantly, are cracking films. This is how all Blu-rays should be.

**RATING: Toy Story ★★★★★
Toy Story 2 ★★★★★**

DETAILS

Price
£22.99 each
Sound
DTS-HD Master
Audio ES 5.1
Director
John Lasseter/
John Lasseter,
Ash Brannon, Lee
Unkrich
Starring
Tom Hanks, Tim
Allen, Joan Cusack

Plus all
the latest
hardware
reviews

Blu-ray Reviews

それはどのようによかったか。

Law Abiding Citizen

PRICE: £24.99

SOUND: Dolby

TrueHD 5.1

DIRECTOR: F Gary

Gray

STARRING: Gerard

Butler, Jamie Foxx, Colm Meaney



ANYONE WHO ENJOYS brutish violence, grisly death scenes and hackneyed dialogue will love *Law Abiding Citizen*. Anyone wanting a good movie should steer well clear. Despite a decent premise and genuinely unsettling opening – a man watches helplessly as his wife is raped and his daughter killed, only for the killer to escape scot-free – this is a dull movie that tries to send out a message but just ends up being offensive. **DJ RATING: ★★★★★**

The Box

PRICE: £17.99

SOUND: DTS-HD

Master Audio 5.1

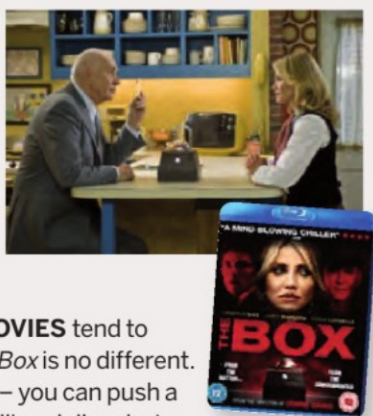
DIRECTOR: Richard

Kelly

STARRING: Cameron

Diaz, James Marsden,

Frank Langella



RICHARD KELLY'S MOVIES tend to divide opinion and *The Box* is no different. Based on a simple idea – you can push a button and receive a million dollars but someone you don't know will die – it soon degenerates into sci-fi hokum that's only held together by fantastic performances from its leads. Despite being 30 minutes too long, *The Box* is a quirky, undeniably interesting movie that will stay with you long after it's finished. **DJ RATING: ★★★★★**

Where The Wild Things Are

PRICE: £22.99

SOUND: DTS-HD

Master Audio 5.1

DIRECTOR: Spike

Jonze

STARRING: James

Gandolfini, Max Records



BESET WITH DIFFICULTIES during production, *Where The Wild Things Are* has nevertheless managed to turn into a highly enjoyable movie that looks stunning in HD. Highly whimsical and surprisingly scary for a kids' film, *Where The Wild Things Are* excels thanks to its superb voice acting and a marvellous turn from newcomer Max Records. It certainly falters in places, but it remains utterly charming to the end. **DJ RATING: ★★★★★**

Harry Brown

PRICE: £24.99

SOUND: DTS-HD

Master Audio 5.1

DIRECTOR: Daniel

Barber

STARRING: Michael

Caine, Emily

Mortimer, Ben Drew



INITIALLY YOU MIGHT think this is nothing more than *Death Wish* with an OAP. Ignore that, however, as *Harry Brown* turns into a surprisingly complex film that not only examines the knife and gun crime that's rampant in today's youth, but also turns in some amazing performances from its mostly young cast. Unflinching and uncomfortable in places, *Harry Brown* is a surprisingly thoughtful and hard-hitting experience. **DJ RATING: ★★★★★**

HD Reviews TVs and sound systems that'll make your gaming come to life



Panasonic TX-P42G20B

PRICE: £899.99

SCREEN SIZE: 42in

RESOLUTION: 1,920 x 1,080

DIMENSIONS: 102.9 x 69.3 x 30.8

PLASMAS ARE COMING back in a big way, so why not go out and treat yourself to this luxurious 42-inch slab of high-definition heaven? Boasting built-in Freeview HD and freesat HD, 600Hz of silky smooth action and a contrast ratio of 5,000,000:1, this Panasonic is perfect for both games and Blu-rays. **★★★★★**



Samsung LE46B550A5

PRICE: £729.99

SCREEN SIZE: 46in

RESOLUTION: 1,920 x 1,080

DIMENSIONS: 113.1 x 77.7 x 27.5

WHILE IT'S A year old now this huge 46-inch monstrosity has plenty to recommend. Featuring built-in Freeview, four HDMI slots and a high contrast ratio it delivers everything you want from a large TV without costing a fortune. A solid LCD television that looks gorgeous thanks to its dual-injection technology finish. **★★★★★**



Panasonic TX-50G20B

PRICE: £1,399.99

SCREEN SIZE: 50in

RESOLUTION: 1,920 x 1,080

DIMENSIONS: 121.8 x 76.9 x 33.5

IF MONEY IS no object then treat yourself to this bad boy. This plasma-based behemoth is a staggering 50 inches in size, has a ridiculously good response speed (0.001ms) making it perfect for rhythm-action games, two USB ports, four HDMI outputs and handles all manner of PC signals. Great for showing off. **★★★★★**

Charts

UK Top 5

- 1 Toy Story**
Pixar's original *Toy Story* movie heads straight to the top of the UK Blu-ray charts. **RATING: ★★★★★**
- 2 Toy Story 2**
The sequel is far better than the original but sadly it only makes second place. **RATING: ★★★★★**
- 3 2012**
Truly dull disaster movie with rubbish acting and, admittedly stunning, videogame visuals. **RATING: ★★★★★**
- 4 Dumbo**
Disney gets it right again as this classic gets resurrected on Blu-ray and looks absolutely fantastic. **RATING: ★★★★★**
- 5 The Hurt Locker**
This year's Best Picture Oscar-winner excels on Blu-ray thanks to a dazzling transfer. **RATING: ★★★★★**

US Top 5

- 1 Avatar**
As if James Cameron's epic wasn't going to hit the number one spot. **RATING: ★★★★★**
- 2 Sherlock Holmes**
Holmes as you've never seen him before and in dazzling high definition to boot. **RATING: ★★★★★**
- 3 The Lord Of The Rings Trilogy**
Jackson's famous trilogy is well worth owning on Blu-ray. **RATING: ★★★★★**
- 4 The Blind Side**
Sandra Bullock's Oscar-winning performance is the best thing about this drippy drama. **RATING: ★★★★★**
- 5 Twilight: New Moon**
Miserable follow-up that looks nice but is filled with wooden acting and truly appalling dialogue. **RATING: ★★★★★**

Top 5 Animation

- 1 Toy Story 2**
An amazing film receives typically fantastic Disney extras and a truly superlative transfer. **RATING: ★★★★★**
- 2 WALL•E**
Another astonishingly good Pixar flick that looks incredible and boasts great extras. **RATING: ★★★★★**
- 3 Fantastic Mr Fox**
Brilliantly clever because it's just another Wes Anderson film. But for kids. **RATING: ★★★★★**
- 4 The Nightmare Before Christmas**
A typically sharp transfer from Disney makes this a must-have. **RATING: ★★★★★**
- 5 FF: The Spirits Within**
The film is certainly poor, but from a Blu-ray point of view Square's movie looks fantastic. **RATING: ★★★★★**

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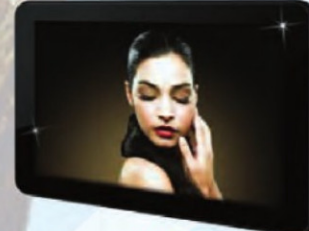
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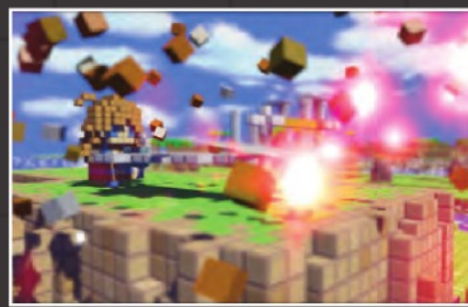
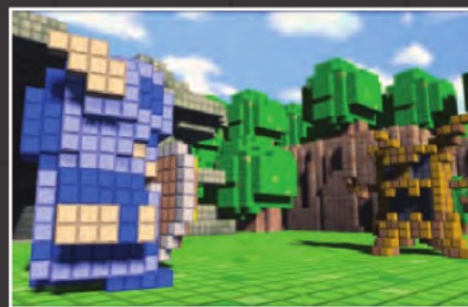
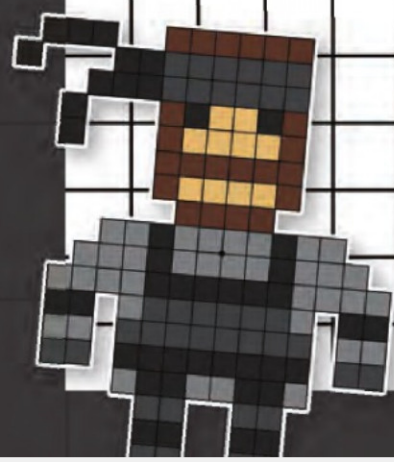
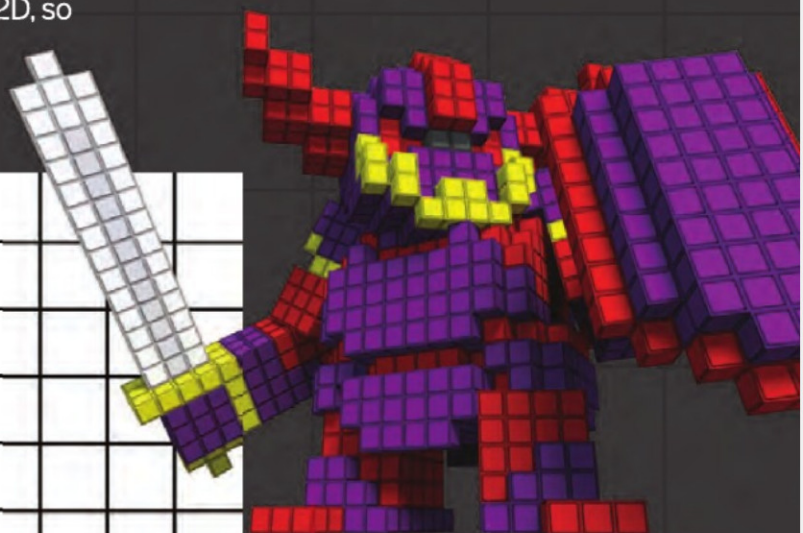
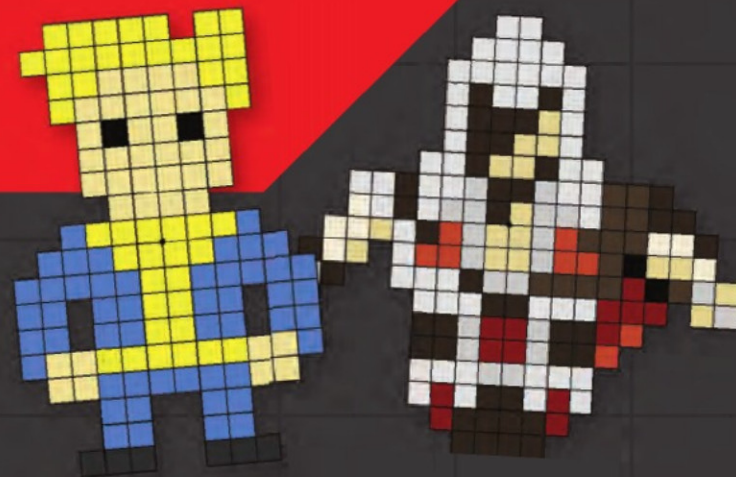
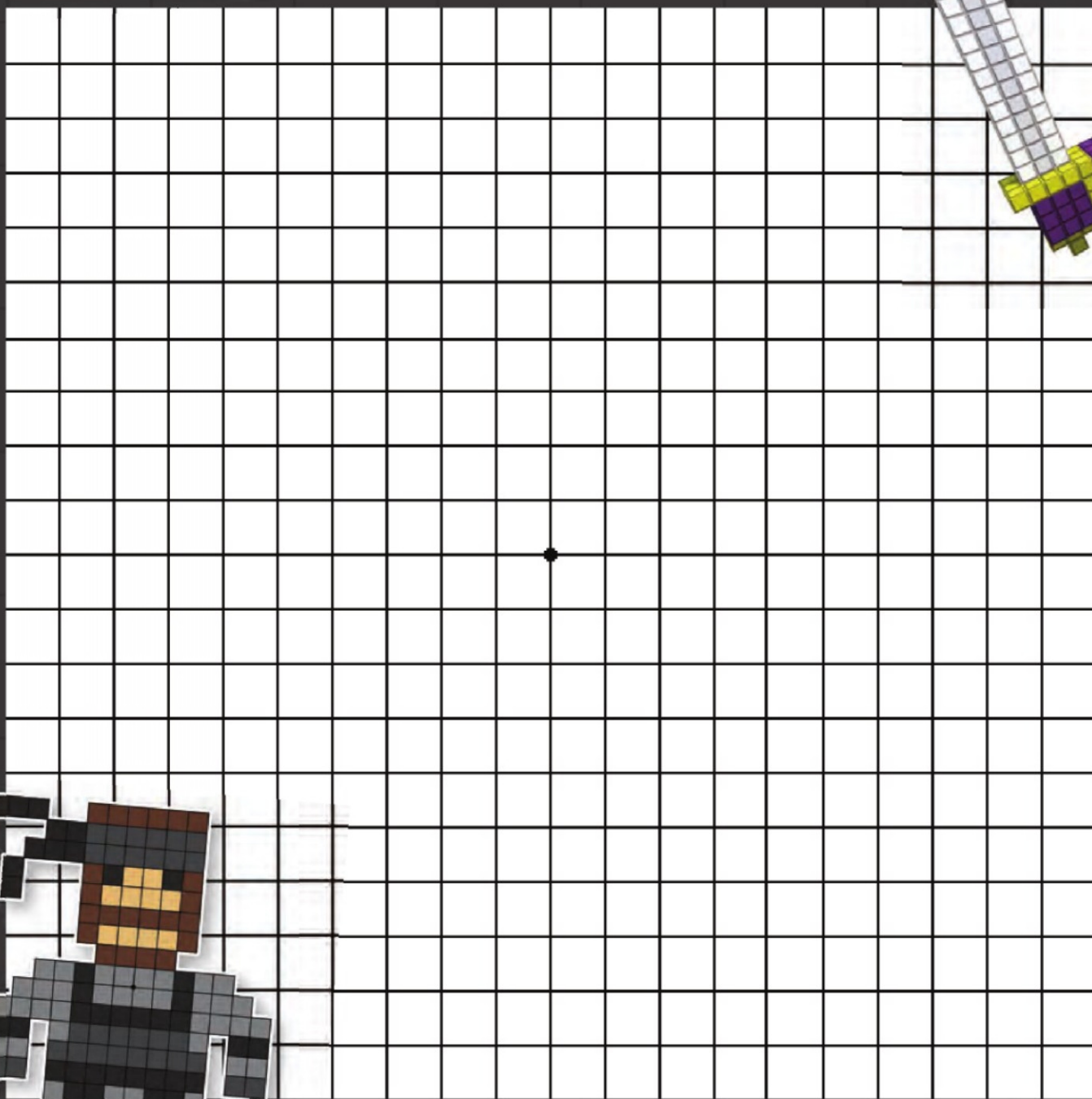
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